

## ABSTRACT

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Film Institute in Arizona

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

## ABSTRACT

The research presented in this study is an intrinsic case study on one specific school, a film institute affiliated with a community college in Arizona that has utilized a unique, innovative model of administration, which the researcher has termed minimalist administration. Under this model, the community college staffed the film institute with limited personnel (serving as combined administrators-instructors), who serviced the students' and college's administration needs, as well as provided the academic educational instruction to the students. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of this model as it applied to the administration of this specific film institute.

The case study was conducted through a series of interviews with individuals from the three constituent groups most affected by this minimalist administration model: the community college, the students, and the full-time administrator-instructors employed under this model. After the collection of data and completion of transcripts, all material was analyzed for common themes that emerged within the individual categories, as well as across all three constituent categories.

The results challenged the literature which indicated that efficiencies in organizational structures are best achieved by a well-staffed bureaucracy and a division of labor in which tasks are divided among many in an organization and not the responsibility of a single individual. Support for this model, however, was not universal for multiple reasons: in particular, the lack of support from within the

traditional education environment, as well as the highly specific leadership skills needed, and the high personal price paid by the administrator-instructors working under this innovative, avant garde model.



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

“MINIMALIST” ADMINISTRATION: AN INNOVATIVE ADMINISTRATION  
MODEL UTILIZED BY A FILM INSTITUTE IN ARIZONA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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BY

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## DEDICATION

To Marguerite, my sister, my best friend, and my guiding light, on *every* journey.  
To my son, Paul, and my brothers and sisters, the true loves of my life.  
To my mom and dad, who *insisted* on education,  
and always wanted a “doctor” in the family.

Your faith, your support, and your love make me believe that I can.  
Everything I do is *for you*. Everything I am is *because of you*...  
There are hardly words to describe my gratitude –  
Let me shout it to the heavens: *I love you always*...

Though time, space, and circumstances keep us apart,  
we are forever connected in soul and heart...

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In October 2000, in partnership with a community college in Arizona, a film institute opened its doors. It was the first film school of its kind in Arizona and the first program of its kind for the community college, which was looking to be an educational pioneer in the emerging technology and media arts fields. In developing a plan for the film institute, the community college convened a committee of educators and film industry professionals to design the curriculum and staffing model for the film institute. The team included the community college president, a prominent screenwriter with 40 years experience and who still worked within the film industry, a retired teacher with 30 years experience in the film instruction from the Los Angeles School District, and a seasoned filmmaker with 20 years experience in the film industry, also still employed within the film industry.

The community college's final plan was simple: design a one-year, intensive, "boot camp" program in narrative filmmaking to train and develop filmmakers through repeated hands-on projects so that students could graduate with an accredited certification, little college debt, and a comprehensive portfolio of work for a film reel, generally required for employment within the film industry. The academic program, developed using an experiential learning model, focused the students' education on



successful completion of weekly film projects, supplemented by necessary instruction in screenwriting, film theory, cinematography, sound, lighting, editing, producing, directing, acting, marketing, and distribution.

In the fall semester, using the latest in digital equipment and technology, a maximum of 20 students was taken through the weekly film projects, followed by weekend seminars with industry professionals. During the spring semester, each student received a complete package of the school's equipment resources and the assistance of a crew of fellow students for a period of two weeks, during which their student thesis film was shot. Additionally, each student was required to serve as crew in exchange and as a learning experience for four additional students, as they also completed a feature-length script. The intensive program culminated in a film festival over Memorial Day weekend, at which student films premiered to the public. Each student graduated with a Certificate in Filmmaking from the community college, nearly all the credentials completed for an associate degree, and more importantly, with a portfolio of completed film projects, a requisite calling card for employment within the film industry. The community college decided to further support this experiential learning model by providing all the digital technology and filmmaking equipment necessary, including cameras, lighting, sound, and computer editing, for students to execute these projects.

Given the substantial financial commitment it was undertaking in capital and equipment overhead, the community college made a unique decision to operate the institute with minimal administration and teaching staff. For the first year, only one

full-time staff member was employed to service the entire film institute. This person served in every capacity, including program director, administrator, and instructor. Additional instruction was provided through more expansive weekend seminars given by film industry expert consultants flown in from nearby Los Angeles.

During the film institute's second year of operation, one additional full-time administrator-instructor was added. In the third year, when the institute's academic program was expanded to include 20 additional students in a documentary track following the same experiential learning model, a third full-time employee for technical support and part-time instruction was added to the staff. Full-time employment levels, as well as student levels, have remained at the same minimal levels since then.

### Statement of the Problem

The community college made a unique, potentially revolutionary, choice in its decision on administration and teaching staffing for the film institute. It selected one person, a seasoned filmmaker with no previous academic experience, to serve as both its principal administrator and principal instructor. As the principal administrator, he was responsible for all components of administration, including recruitment, admissions, financial aid, academic certification, budgets, student counseling, public relations, and marketing, with clerical assistance and support provided by various administration staff at the community college. As the principal instructor, he was responsible for the academic program, serving as both its primary teacher, as well as a

learning facilitator, mentoring the students through the weekly film projects, including evaluation of the process, the film project, and the final product. Additionally, he was responsible for the coordination of the weekend instructional seminars with the industry's professional consultants. For the purposes of this case study, and as it is commonly referred to within this particular community college, this model for administration and staffing is referred to as a minimalist administration model. An expanded definition for this term is provided within this research.

For a fairly traditionally staffed community college, it was an innovative move to select one person as the entire administration and teaching staff for a film institute. Although the choice to operate with minimal staff allowed a new academic program with heavy overhead costs to be started quickly, such a model for administration and staffing was unusual within traditional college systems and not currently documented in educational materials researched. If it was successful, this model could potentially revolutionize educational staffing decisions in administration and instruction, not only within this college, but in other traditional educational institutions. Thus the problem is, from the perspective of the three primary constituencies being served (students, administrator-instructors and community college partners), does a minimalist administration model function effectively in the administration of a film institute? And is the academic program being weakened by the use of this minimalist administration model?

To examine these questions, this researcher chose to conduct an intrinsic case study on this one specific school: a film institute affiliated with a community college

in Arizona, which has operated using this minimalist administration model since it opened and for the succeeding four years. The case study was conducted through a series of interviews with individuals from the three constituent groups most affected by this minimalist administration model: the community college, the students, and the full-time administrator-instructors employed under this model.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to assess the effectiveness of the minimalist administration model as it applied, in this particular case study, to the administration of a specific film institute, affiliated with a community college in Arizona.

Information was gathered interviewing three constituent groups: the students, the administrator-instructors, and the community college partners. Three major questions were pursued in the course of this case study:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a minimalist administration model in the administration of a film institute?
2. What is the impact and effect of using a minimalist administration model on (a) the students, (b) the administrator-instructors, and (c) the community college partners?
3. Is the academic program being weakened by the use of the minimalist administration model?

In addition to addressing these questions, the researcher also attempted to validate three hypotheses regarding the use of the minimalist administration model in an educational institution:

Hypothesis 1: This study will find that, even with efficiencies enjoyed by the use of the minimalist administration model, this administration model will not be supported across all constituent groups.

Hypothesis 2: This study will find that even with the minimal structure, low levels of bureaucracy and decision-making authority, and cost efficiencies, the minimalist administration model will not be found to be a model which can be easily implemented and replicated in educational institutions.

Hypothesis 3: There will be identifiable leadership skills stated by the respondents and supported by the literature that are pivotal to success under the minimalist administration model.

### Significance of the Study

Historically, budgets and staffing have been significant considerations for educational institutions. Current economic conditions in America, as well as shrinking budgets and enrollment, are challenging schools even further to be diligent in expenditure choices. Budgetary challenges in the future may force educational institutions to consider unconventional ways to staff and administer programs, including functioning with minimal administration and teaching staff.

A case study that explores the advantages and disadvantages of a minimalist administration model and its impact and effectiveness on providing service to the three principal constituencies affected by administration and teaching could provide a base of knowledge for future changes in staffing and administration for schools and colleges, particularly when they are looking to cut costs and manage tighter budgets, yet still provide a quality education. Lessons can be gleaned from this case study that may assist traditional educational institutions in making innovative and cost-saving staffing decisions during leaner budgetary times and also allow them to understand the consequences and impact of such a decision on their staff and their students. By reviewing this study, administrators and principal decision-makers in educational institutions, such as governing boards, principals, and department heads, could assess whether a minimalist administration model would be effective within specific departments, select programs, or throughout an entire school.

## Limitations and Delimitations

### Limitations

- This being an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995), there were no statistical generalizations, generic phenomena, or broad abstract theories to be validated. This case study was undertaken to understand a limited, single case, “with its own unique history, operating within a number of contexts, physical, economic, ethical, and aesthetic” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 239).

- No other community colleges or film institutes in Arizona were found that use this administration model, so no additional data exists for comparative analysis of other institutions working under this model.
- The validity of the data was dependent on the individual respondents telling the truth, with the assumption made that these same individual respondents would respond similarly to another respondent at another time. The study was limited to the extent that some individual statements may not have been truthful, although the researcher finds no evidence for that to be the case.

#### Delimitations

- The researcher chose to study one specific case, a one-year film institute affiliated with a community college in Arizona, which created and is currently operating under the minimalist administration model.
- The study was limited to the examination and analysis of the perspectives of the three constituent groups interviewed: community college, students, and administrator-instructors. The findings are limited to the perspectives of these constituencies.
- In order to keep interview bias to a minimum and provide opportunity for truthful statements and candid observations, the interviews were all conducted in settings selected by and comfortable to the individual participants. Risks and confidentiality protections were explained in detail to each subject prior to the start of

the interview, and releases were signed cooperatively by each respondent. It was assumed that the respondents were candid with the researcher.

### Definitions by this Researcher

Because it is a term that is at the center of this research, the definition of minimalist administration model is emphasized apart from other definitions.

Minimalist administration: A term developed by this researcher exclusively for the purposes of this study. It is used to define a unique administration model developed for administration of a new film institute by a community college in Arizona in the fall of 2000. Under this model, one person, but not more than three, is the principal administrator at the film institute, responsible for all administration responsibilities, including recruitment, admissions, financial aid, academic certification, budgets, student counseling, public relations, and marketing. Additionally, under the minimalist administration model, the principal administrator also serves as the principal instructor at the film institute, responsible for the primary teaching responsibilities of the film institute's academic curriculum as well. For the purposes of this case study, this single combined position, responsible for both administration and instruction, will be titled "administrator-instructor."

Further explanation of the minimalist administration model, particularly as it compares to other administration models, is conducted in the literature review section of this research.



Other definitions include the following.

Administrator-instructor #1 (A-I-1): Executive director for both the narrative and documentary programs at the film institute, and principal administrator and principal instructor for the narrative filmmaking curriculum at the institute.

Administrator-instructor #2 (A-I-2): Principal administrator and principal instructor for the documentary program at the film institute and principal instructor for editing at both the narrative and documentary programs at the institute.

Administrator-instructor #3 (A-I-3): For both narrative and documentary programs, principal administrator for equipment and technical support, assistant instructor for editing, and on-location field instructor.

Cinematography: The art and technique of film photography and the capturing of images for film, including knowledge of lighting, lenses, framing, effects, color, shooting style, angles, film stock, and cameras.

Common theme: For the purposes of this research, an observation or similar response to questions made by the majority of respondents from each constituent group interviewed.

Community college: For the purpose of this case study, a specific community college in Arizona, with campuses in Prescott, the Verde Valley, Cottonwood, and Sedona, where a film institute was opened in fall 2000.

Community college partners: Administration staff employed by the community college who are responsible for the supervision and coordination of the film institute's program on behalf of the community college.

Documentary filmmaking: Filmmaking genre that presents a factual, nonfiction, journalistic-style film recording of real persons (not actors or performers), places, or events, frequently capturing reality as it happens, also called “direct cinema” or “cinema verité filmmaking” (Dirk, 2006). Examples of popularly known documentary films include *Fahrenheit 911*, *Bowling for Columbine*, and films with educational themes frequently seen on PBS, The History Channel, and A&E Biography.

Editing: The technical process of arranging a film into final form, including the selection of shots, scenes, sequences, and integration of sound and sound tracks with film images (New School, 2006).

Executive director: For the purposes of this case study, supervising and managing director of both academic tracks of the film institute, narrative and documentary.

Experiential learning: Learning model where “you learn by doing” (Ontario Education Communications Authority [ECA], 2005, p. 1), “a methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience, . . . in order to increase knowledge, develop skills” (Pickles, 2006, p. 1).

Film industry: Profession involving the making of movies on film stock, video, digital video, high-definition video, or computers for the purposes of viewing in theaters or directly to video, Internet, or public or private viewing. This definition includes movies made for entertainment, education, propaganda, documentaries, etc., in all genres.

Film institute: Specific subject of the case study, a one-year intensive experiential learning program in filmmaking, affiliated with a community college in Arizona, with both narrative and documentary filmmaking tracks.

Media and arts field: Professions involving cameras, computers, film, graphics, animation, Internet, video, web, and design.

Narrative filmmaking: Filmmaking genre that is plot-driven, often completely fictionalized or a fictionalized version of reality, in which a chronological or linear story (with a beginning, middle, and end) is told, also called dramatic or theatrical filmmaking (Dirk, 2006). Narrative films, the type of films most frequently seen at contemporary movie theatres, can be made in various styles, including comedy, horror, drama, experimental, animated, science fiction, or action.

Principal administrator: For the purposes of this case study, a single administrator at the film institute, responsible for all administration responsibilities, including recruitment, admissions, financial aid, academic certification, budgets, student counseling, public relations, and marketing, within one of the film institute's two academic tracks, narrative or documentary.

Principal instructor: For the purposes of this case study, the principal instructor at the film institute responsible for the primary teaching responsibilities within one of the film institute's two academic tracks, narrative or documentary.

Screenwriting: The development and writing of a script to be filmed, including dialogue to be spoken, action, locations, and scene descriptions or settings.

Students #1-#8 (S-1 to S-8): Former students who have completed the program at the film institute in Years 1-4. For the purposes of this case study, students were also selected from those who have been involved at the film institute in some additional capacity following graduation, including acting, mentoring, or volunteering so that they might offer expanded perspectives on students, staff, and the program in subsequent years when they were not students.

### Summary

To summarize Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to provide a review of a select case, specifically, a film institute affiliated with a community college in Arizona that has initiated a new minimalist administration model for the administration of the film school. Specific areas of review included the advantages and disadvantages of using a minimalist administration model; the impact and effect of using this model on three constituencies: the students, the administrator-instructors, and the community college partners; and whether the academic program is being weakened by the use of the minimalist administration model.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant research and literature related to administration models and leadership styles. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology. Chapter 4 is a presentation and analysis of the data collected in the examination of the three research questions, as well as related themes

volunteered during the course of the respondent interviews. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, discussion of the conclusions, the implications of the results, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter 2 provides a review of selected literature related to administration models and leadership styles. Because this Arizona community college has developed and applied a new, unique model for the administration of the film institute, for the purposes of this case study described as minimalist administration model, it is important to review the literature on other more commonly known administration models to understand how this particular model fits into other administration profiles. Additionally, because respondent interviews frequently referred to unique leadership characteristics of the current administrator-instructors operating under this minimalist administration model, this chapter also includes a review of literature on leadership styles.

#### Administration Models

To attain excellence, a college or university must develop an organizational model for itself. (Blake & Mouton, 1985, p. 29)

Hoy and Miskel (1996) wrote, “Schools are formal organizations with many of the same characteristics as bureaucratic organizations” (p. 59). For this reason, many researchers and writers in education have used Max Weber’s (1947) classic analysis of bureaucracy as the foundation to analyze organizational structure in schools. “Almost

all modern organizations have characteristics enumerated by Weber: a division of labor and specialization, an impersonal orientation, a hierarchy of authority, rules and regulations, and a career orientation” (p. 47). However, as Hoy and Miskel note, the basic assumption of bureaucracies--that every subordinate has less technical expertise than his or her superior--does not always apply in schools. Frequently, teaching professionals have more competence and technical expertise than the administrators who occupy a higher level within the organization. What Hoy and Miskel propose, then, is not to examine schools as bureaucratic or nonbureaucratic but to examine the degree of bureaucratization, using the important components of the Weberian model. Because of its innovative and nontraditional structure, in order to understand the minimalist administration model, it is important to find similar organization typology in the literature research to compare it to.

Hoy and Miskel (1996), in *Educational Administration: Theory, Research and Practice*, present an assessment chart (see Appendix A) in which school structures are assessed by levels of bureaucratic patterns and professional patterns. When applying this assessment to the administration model used by the film institute being examined in this case study, the minimalist administration models falls most closely to the professional structure. Like the professional structure, in the minimalist administration model, bureaucratic levels are low and professional expertise and competencies are high. Members of the teaching staff are viewed as professionals who have the expertise and competence to make important organizational decisions. Teacher professionals control the decision making, and administrators are subordinate

to teachers in the sense that their primary role is to serve the teachers and to facilitate the teaching-learning process. Professional structures are complex organizations with highly professional staff, multiple sets of goals, high teacher autonomy, and horizontal rather than vertical relations. The effectiveness of such organizations depends almost exclusively on the expertise, commitment, and service of the teachers (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). As evident in the respondent observations and as reviewed in the summary assessment, the minimalist administration model bears many similarities to the Professional Structure organizational model.

To further understand the minimalist administration model, it is also useful to review Mintzberg's (1989, cited in Hoy & Miskel, 1996) basic organization structure model. He describes structure simply as the ways in which an organization divides its labor into tasks and then achieves coordination among them. Using Mintzberg's structural chart, it is easy to see where labor is divided in the traditional organization model and also, using an alternative regrouping of these clear labor delineations, how the minimalist administration model reassigns its organization of labor (see Appendix B). In traditional educational institutions, multiple responsibilities are usually assigned to several people, whereas under the minimalist administration model, these varied responsibilities are centralized into one combined job at the film institute, that of administrator-instructor. Mintzberg describes five key parts of an organization, each with a critical function to perform:

- **The Operating Core:** Comprises those who perform the basic work, activities directly related to the production of products and services. In schools, the teachers are the operating core, and learning is the outcome.



- The Strategic Apex: Consists of the top administrators who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring the organization effectively serves its mission.
- The Middle Line: Constitutes the administrators below who connect the Strategic Apex with the Operating Core, and are responsible for direct control of the Operating Core.
- The Technostructure: Comprises the administrative component charged with the responsibility of planning and work and curriculum standardization.
- The Support Staff: Consists of specialized units which provide support for the organization outside the Operating Core. (Hoy & Miskel, 1996, p. 67-68)

Under the minimalist administration model at the film institute, the functions of the operating core, the middle line, and technostructure are all combined into one administrator-instructor function. The community college partners serve as the strategic apex and provide the support staff as well as support the operating core, middle line, and technostructure, which in this case study are essentially consolidated into one combined position.

Also worth examining in this case study is how the film institute's minimalist model contrasts with Weber's basic organizational principals that emphasize hierarchy and bureaucracy. Weber believed that bureaucracy maximizes rational decision making and administrative efficiencies and that "division of labor happens because tasks in most organization are too complex to be performed by a single individual; division of labor among positions improves efficiency" (Hoy & Miskel, 1996, p. 47). In contrast to the Weber model, many of the tasks and responsibilities in the minimalist administration model rest with one or a few individuals, resulting in

distinct budgetary, bureaucratic, and academic efficiencies. Efficiency, as will be elaborated on within Chapter 4 of this study, is one of the positive attributes ascribed to and advocated for in retention of the minimalist administration model at the film institute.

Weber also argued that the working atmosphere of a bureaucracy should provide an impersonal orientation, “the dominance of a spirit of formalistic impersonality, ‘*sine ira et studio*,’ without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm” (Hoy & Miskel, 1996, p. 48). Impersonality on the part of administrators and teachers assures equality of treatment and facilitates rationality. As presented in Chapter 4, under the minimalist administration model, the learning environment created for the students was consistently described as inspiring and motivational, with the administrator-instructors exhibiting strong passion for the subject (filmmaking), which then motivated the students to high academic achievement, reflected by their successful completion of weekly film projects and a final student thesis film which was presented for public viewing at year’s end.

Perhaps the organizational model most analogous to the film institute’s minimalist administration model can be found in Mintzberg’s (1989) *Mintzberg on Management*. Interestingly, Mintzberg even mentions “film” in describing how this innovative organization model might apply more appropriately than traditional organizational models to address the sophisticated innovation needs of “a high-technology research organization, an avant garde film company, or a factory manufacturing complex prototypes” (p. 198). He calls this model the “innovative

organization model” or the “adhocracy model” (p. 198). Under this model, teams of specialists become functional members of operating project teams based on their specific skills and training, with independent responsibility to effect coordination and leadership within the team and between other teams. Supervision and formal authority is less important, with managers working as functioning members of the project team.

According to Mintzberg (1989), many people with conventional perspectives, “such as conventional consultants, government people, and at least one Harvard Business Review editor” (p. 197), have a hard time accepting and understanding the innovative organizational model. They view machine bureaucracy as not just one possible form of structure but the *only* structure. To these conventional thinkers, structure means “hierarchy of authority, top-down control, unity of command, detailed planning, formalization of procedure, and all the rest” (p. 197). Adhocracy, which violates every one of those notions, therefore appears to them as chaos, the absence of structure. But adhocracy is structure, too, logical and reasonable as any other, but it requires changing the context and perspective on “structure” and “organization.” In quoting a comment from the novel *Sho-gun*, Mintzberg suggests a way for conventional thinkers to understand how the innovative organizational model can be viewed as structured: “It is all so simple, Anjin-san; just change your concept of the world” (p. 197). The same can possibly be said for helping others at traditional educational institutions understand the avant garde minimalist administration model of the film institute. This issue is further explored in Chapter 4.

One final administration study worth exploring is one presented by Blake and Mouton (1985). They identify the following basic responsibilities of academic administrators:

1. Establishing and implementing an implicit or explicit mission and administering the activities that result,
2. Supporting the teaching and learning process,
3. Establishing and supporting the curriculum,
4. Creating a climate for high-quality research,
5. Encouraging service to the university and community and beyond,
6. Acquiring and distributing financial resources through budgetary management,
7. Managing the academic personnel function,
8. Coordinating student affairs,
9. Managing external relations in order to secure and maintain the allegiance of various outside groups, and
10. Maintaining the physical plant and basic operations to provide necessary support services. (p. 30)

Blake and Mouton (1985) identify these major activities as the primary responsibilities of the academic administrator in a college or university. It is useful to examine whether these principal tasks can be accomplished with the limited staff working under the minimalist administration model.

Additionally, Blake and Mouton (1985) presented an Academic Administrator Grid Model as a systematic framework for identifying where administrators fit on the grid, based on two fundamental aspects of leadership when an academic administrator exercises his/her responsibilities: (1) concern for institutional performance, and (2)

concern for people. This model is presented in analyzing the effectiveness of the film institute's minimalist administration model because it acknowledges particular administrator tasks and leadership skills that apply when assessing performance of an academic administrator, which are further explored in the following section.

### Leadership Styles

In 1971, Phi Delta Kappa conducted a national symposium on leadership, which was attended by many of the scholars engaged in leadership research. In debating the leader's role in the education system, there was little general agreement among researchers and writers on the meaning of the word "leader" (Morphet, Johns, & Reller, 1982). Lipham (1964) in "Leadership and Administration," Chapter 6 of *Behavioral Science and Educational Administration*, attempts to define the term by "suggesting in effect that the term *leader* be restricted to the role of change agent and that the term *administrator* be used to denote the role of maintaining the organization" (Lipham, 1964, p. 121). Morphet et al. in *Educational Organization and Administration* disagreed with Lipham, suggesting that "leadership can be provided by an administrator in acts of maintaining an organization as well as in acts as a change agent" (p. 95). The scholars at the symposium did not develop a definition of leadership agreed to by all participants, but there seemed to be general agreement on the following characteristics of leadership:

1. Leadership is not domination or coercion but the promotion of followership.

2. Leadership promotes change but it may also resist change to maintain the school social system from forces both within and external to the system which are pressing for undesirable change (Morphet et al., 1982, p. 96).

This definition was further expanded upon by leadership researcher Burns (1978, cited in Morphet et al., 1982) in his book, *Leadership*, who states,

Some define leadership as leaders making followers do what followers would not otherwise do, or as leaders making followers do what the leaders want them to do. I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivation—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers. . . . Leadership, unlike naked power-wielding, is thus inseparable from followers' needs and goals. (p. 96)

After years of research on leadership, beginning as early as 1925, many current social scientists have now conceptualized leadership as

The influencing of the actions, behaviors, beliefs, and goals of one actor in a social system by another actor, with the willing cooperation of the actor being influenced. The willing cooperation of the other actors in the social system with the leader cannot be attained, as Burns pointed out, unless the goals represent the values, motivations, wants, needs, aspirations, and expectations of both leaders and followers. (Morphet et al., 1982, p. 96)

It is important to understand this explanation and definition of leadership in reviewing this specific case. As is explored in the analysis chapter of this report, this same leadership behavior is reflected within the educational social system of the film institute in Arizona, the subject of this case study. It is particularly evident in the constituent observations noting a cooperative leadership style that reflects aspirations of both leaders and followers and influences actions with the willing cooperation of the actors being influenced.

Another leadership model worth exploring is Max Weber's, which for years has served as the foundation to analyze leadership styles/models schools. In *Transaction and Transformation Leadership Authority*, Weber classified three principal types of leadership authority: charismatic authority, traditional authority, and bureaucratic/rational legal authority (cited in Boje & Dennehy, 2000).

Under the charismatic authority model, also called the transformer model, authority is given based on the sacred and outstanding characteristic of the individual (Mullins, 2004). This individual is endowed with heroic qualities and superhuman powers, set apart from ordinary people. People obey this leader by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelations, heroism, or exemplary qualities--essentially, belief in his charisma. The charismatic leader is often described with words such as warrior, prophet, hero, or visionary (Boje & Dennehy, 2000).

Under the traditional authority model, also described as a feudal model, authority rests on the customs and traditions handed down from the past, with the power to control and command anointed from past authority. Authority under this model is given by tradition or patrimony, with no rational ordering of relationships by rules, training, or competence. Commands and promotion are frequently swayed by arbitrariness, irrationality, and political favoritism. This traditional authority model is often corrupt and disorganized, with little room for objective development of capitalism (Boje & Dennehy, 2000).

Weber seemed to favor most the bureaucratic/rational legal authority model, also called the transactional model. Under this model, authority is attained through

bureaucracy (namely a clearly defined hierarchy of offices), in which authority is specifically delineated and exercised impersonally through their offices. Weber believed bureaucracy to be the most efficient and rational form of organization (Mullins, 2004), with its advantages being that organizations could be impersonally ordered, with everyone operating under a legal pattern of normative values and rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (Boje & Dennehy, 2000).

Some researchers have observed that Weber's notions about the positive social consequences from operating under this specific authority model were idealistic. Weber believed that an efficient bureaucratic/rational legal authority model would not only prevent corruption, unfairness, and nepotism (which characterized many of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century organizations he was studying), but it would also lead to positive social consequences, including (a) leveling of the social classes by allowing a wide range of recruits with technical competence to be taken by any organization; (b) plutocracy, because of the time required to achieve the necessary training, and (c) a greater degree of social equality due to the dominance of the spirit of impersonality or objectivity (Mullins, 2004). Closer inspection of this model, however, finds that although it appears to be technically efficient and particularly well-received within contemporary capitalist structures, it is also prone to being co-opted by leaders with personal interests or intentions, who could then turn this characteristically efficient, impersonal authority system into a monarchy or feudal system similar to Weber's traditional



authority model, thus eliminating any positive consequences of the bureaucratic/rational legal authority model.

Schlechtny (1990) proposes a leadership model that identifies five types of leaders:

- Trailblazers: Love to take paradigm-breaking journeys without maps and only a vision to guide.
- Pioneers: Willing risk takers who will make changes once they know it is possible and worthwhile.
- Settlers: People who are somewhat dissatisfied with current practice and will go along with strong leadership support.
- Homebodies: Happy with the status quo and will not change.
- Saboteurs: Blockers who promote discontent. (Labbie, 2000, p. 133)

This leadership model is being presented because it references two words that surfaced repeatedly in describing characteristics of the film institute's two principal administrator-instructors during the course of this case study: trailblazer and pioneer. Although these two words are frequently used interchangeably in common conversation, Schlechtny draws a clear distinction between these two words, separating them out as two different leadership styles with different characteristics. This distinction is important to note and understand, particularly as it is applied during the analysis portion of this case study.

Merton (cited in Sergiovanni, 1973) proposes a framework for educational stereotyping for teachers and administrators that distinguishes between two major latent role identities found in organizations: cosmopolitan orientation and local

orientation. Three variables distinguish between individuals with one orientation or another:

1. Loyalty to the school,
2. Commitment to one's specialization or to one's professional skills, and
3. Reference-group orientation. (p. 140)

This leadership model is presented and noted within this case study because it references a strong commitment to one's specialization or skills, generally ascribed to the cosmopolitan orientation. This was another characteristic mentioned repeatedly in individual interviews as a leadership quality displayed by the principal administrator-instructors who served as a driving force behind the effective operation of the film institute. This model is referenced again during the analysis portion of this research.

Sergiovanni (1973) further elaborates on Merton's model:

Cosmopolitans are described as those low in loyalty to the employing school, high on commitment to specialized professional skills, and likely to identify with an outside reference group. Locals, on the other hand, are those high in loyalty to the employing school, low in commitment to specialized professional skills, and likely to identify with an inner reference group. Of course, many teachers and administrators exhibit a combination of these traits, but most, nevertheless, lean toward one or the other orientation. (p. 144)

Sergiovanni (1973) notes that locals are the more predominant orientation in American schools, an orientation that provides the necessary cohesiveness and maintenance that constitutes the foundation for any school enterprise. Cosmopolitans are generally more difficult to accommodate within present school structures than locals. Providing cosmopolitans with meaningful outlets for their need expressions, however, can harvest unique school benefits that are derived from the expertise and

professional skills that they offer. This cosmopolitan leadership model may be most easily accommodated within the type of nontraditional administration and instruction model that is currently in place at the film institute being explored in this case study.

As Sergiovanni (1973) further notes, “The cosmopolitan orientation, however, offers the school the needed transfusion which keeps it in the mainstream of ‘what’s happening’ in American education and in society in general” (Sergiovanni, 1973, p. 144). This externally trained and focused cosmopolitan orientation of teachers and administrators may be most appropriate in the staffing of a media program such as the film institute, reflecting society’s increasing media orientation through television, cable, movies, and the Internet. This is considered further in the analysis section of this research.

A fourth approach to leadership examines the phenomenon in terms of the behavior of effective leaders. In research conducted by Halpin, in *Theory and Research in Administration*, the behavior of aircraft commanders and school superintendents was studied and compared (cited in Gorton, 1980). Interestingly, metaphors and comparisons of this film institute program to military situations were referenced repeatedly by numerous constituents interviewed during this case study, hence, the presentation of this particular leadership study.

In his study, Halpin (cited in Gorton, 1980) found that with aircraft commanders and school superintendents, two sets of behavior were found to be associated with effective leadership:

1. The first, *initiating structure*, refers to a leader’s behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and members of his work group and in

endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure. The leader who assumes this leadership role will attempt to define the behavior he expects from each member of the organization, and he will emphasize the importance of “getting the job done.”

2. The second, *consideration*, involves the expression of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth between the leader and the group. The administrator who assumes this leadership role will attempt to develop a positive and satisfying relationship between himself and his followers, and he will try to promote a spirit of cooperation among the different members of the group he is leading. (p. 270)

Consideration behavior on the part of a leader represents an attempt to meet the maintenance needs of a group, although initiating structure can be regarded as behavior designed to help a group achieve its objectives. Halpin (cited in Gorton, 1980) emphasizes that both types of leadership behavior are important.

Administrators who wish to be leaders must engage in both types of behavior if they are to meet the achievement goals of their organizations and, at the same time, maintain positive and satisfying relationships with and among the people with whom they work. This type of leadership requires the administrator to integrate the expectations of the organization with the personal needs of the people who work in that organization. In most situations, in order to achieve those objectives successfully, he must meet the personal and emotional needs of those whom he seeks to lead in order to secure their continuing cooperation and commitment.

Finally, contemporary leadership models are also important to study because they expound further upon the psychological impact of an inspiring leader in affecting the group's performance, which was also evident during the course of this case study. Additionally, and equally as important in contributing to the psychological impact, is

the leader's role in understanding the distinctive abilities and attributes of the individual members of the group and managing those skills to the group's advantage.

A basic definition of leadership mentions both of these factors as important to inspirational leadership and its psychological effect on group performance:

Analyzing the inspirational leader (one who can instill passion and direction into a group of individuals) requires an understanding of how the psychology of the group can affect the members of the group. . . . Each individual has various environments that bring out different facets from their own identity and emotionally charged perceptions that drive each facet within each environment. When leaders change their actions in accordance with their awareness of what those actions really mean, they affect the emotional and perceptive affects on the individual and the group. (Wikipedia, 2007, p. 1)

Carmazzi in *Directive Communication Methodology*, also notes that an inspiring leader is able to take note of the individual strengths and weaknesses and through his or her leadership manage the psychology of the group and lead the organization to greater achievement: "Leadership does not involve changing the mindset of the group, but the cultivation of an environment that brings out the best and inspires the individuals in that group. . . . To lead, one must build a platform through education and awareness where individuals fill each other's needs" (p.1).

The idea of strong leadership managing individual needs and abilities is further explored in recently published *Go Put Your Strength to Work* (Buckingham, 2007). This work further revives the attributes of the "strength movement" and the leader's recognition and use of individual strengths in leading successful organizations. Buckingham notes that this leadership concept has been around since Drucker's 1966 comments in *The Effective Executive*, and promotes the use of a practical system to help leaders identify and label strengths within their organization, and then use them

to maximize results. “The effective executive builds on strengths--their own strengths, the strengths of superiors, colleagues, subordinates; and on the strengths of the situation” (Buckingham, 2007, p. 1).

Barsade (2006), in *The Ripple Effect*, expands beyond the psychological impact of the leader and the recognition of the individual skills and abilities to include emotional factors in group dynamics. Barsade encourages leaders to navigate teams to greater accomplishment by understanding how psychology and emotion impact group performance. Her study focuses on the social influences and performance in groups as being affected by “emotional contagion, a process in which a person or group influences the emotions or behavior of another person or group through the conscious or unconscious induction of emotional states and behavioral attitudes” (p. 1). Barsade notes how these shared social group dynamics go beyond the mere sharing of ideas and create a collective emotion that can affect individual attitudes as well as team dynamics. These emotional factors are important for getting work done, as people are strongly influenced by others in their shared social environment.

The influence of strong leadership in the success of the minimalist administration model was very evident during this case study. As further explained in the analysis portion of this study, leadership was a more critical factor than previously considered at the outset of this study, and likely as important a factor as the actual use of this innovative administration model. Therefore, it is important to consider both

traditional and contemporary leadership research, as well as administration research, in understanding this case study, which is why both subjects have been presented in depth during this literature review.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

In *The Art of Case Study Research*, Stake (1995) describes case study as the “study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). There could not be a more appropriate format for reviewing and capturing the complexities of the unique case of this film institute in Arizona, which has created and is operating under the minimalist administration model. This is a single unique case of a community college that has created this minimalist administration model for managing this film institute. Research and review of literature has not uncovered any other educational institutions operating under such an administration model.

In examining a single case, qualitative research methods, principally through individual interviews, were determined to be the best method by which to examine the perspective of the distinct constituencies being impacted by the use of this minimalist administration model. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical material--case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts--that describe



routine and problematic moments and meanings in people's lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Several of these qualitative research methods were used during the course of this case study.

### Methodology

Specific research questions were developed to gather information from respondents at three levels who are involved with and affected by the minimalist administration design: students, administrator-instructors, and community college partners. The respondents were asked:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a minimalist administration model in the administration of a film institute?
2. What is the impact and effect of using this model on the students, the administrator-instructors, and the community college partners?
3. Is the academic program being weakened by the use of the minimalist administration model?

Identified respondents were invited to participate in individual qualitative interviews, during which specific questions approved for their constituent category were asked and participants could respond and embellish individually. Each interview was taped and script-taped (handwritten notes were taken verbatim during the interview) as the questions were addressed.

### Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to observe and assess a new and innovative administration style introduced into the community college education system by a film institute in the Southwest. Knowledge was gained from interviewing students who have learned under this unique administration style, administrator-instructors working under this new system, and the community college partners supervising the management and education results under this system.

The student interviewees volunteered their perspectives on the effects of this system on their academic educational experience. The community college partners, as supervisory entities, volunteered their perspective on productivity and educational outcome under this system. The administrator-instructors offered their perspectives on educational, personal, and professional considerations under this new administration system.

This study drew on traditions of qualitative research methodology. The case study method was considered most appropriate to use, as it draws attention to the question of what specifically can be learned from the single case. As Stake (1995) indicates,

A case may be simple or complex. It may be a child or a classroom of children. . . . It is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one. The time we may spend concentrating our inquiry on the one may be long or short, but while we so concentrate, we engage in case study. (p. 2)

Such a model for research has been defined by other names. Stenhouse (1984, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), advocates calling the product a “case record” (p. 237). Simmons (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), when asked at the second

Cambridge Conference what he called his own studies, reluctantly said, “Fieldwork,” adding that such labels contribute little to the understanding of what researchers do. According to Merriam (1988), confusion stems from the fact that case study has been used interchangeably with fieldwork, ethnography, participant observation, exploratory research, and naturalistic inquiry. However, as Stake (1995) describes, the more the object of the study is a specific, unique, bounded system, the greater the usefulness of the epistemological rationale described in this chapter. The practice of defining a study of an individual object or case as a “case study” is widely established.

More specifically, this researcher has committed to what Stake (1995) has defined as an *intrinsic case study*. Such a study is not undertaken because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest. The researcher temporarily subordinates other curiosities so that the case may reveal its story. The purpose is not to come to understand some abstract construct, generic phenomenon, or theory. Study is undertaken because of intrinsic interest in this particular case (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The researcher further delineated the research by using the ethnographic ethos of *interpretive study* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), seeking out academic meanings held by the people within the case, specifically the community college partners, students, and administrator-instructors. Not knowing at the outset what the issues, perceptions, and theory would be, the researcher entered the scene knowing that certain problems, relationships, and events were important yet discovered through the individual

interviews that actually some were of little consequence. Although multiple perspectives were recorded, allowing for complex observations about the institute, the primary material and conclusions reported for the purposes of this study were: (a) a consolidation of the observations each individual subject group held in common about this unique minimalist administration model, and (b) unique observations reported by individuals that merit consideration for changes or improvement to quality of education and the administration system at the institute.

### Population and Sample

The population was divided into three categories: community college partners, students, and administrator-instructors. The community college partners representatives interviewed were chosen based on their direct involvement in the supervision and management of the film institute. The students were chosen by two criteria: (1) their participation in and completion of a course of study at the institute during the first four years of its operation, and (2) their involvement as an alumnus at the institute, even in a cursory way as an actor, mentor, volunteer, or advisor, so as to offer a broader, more objective perspective on the institute. Additionally, students were selected from each of the four years of study to provide a variety of perspectives based on the changes in the programs and staffing during the four years. Because of their limited numbers, each administrator-instructor, who had been employed full-time at the institute during the first four years, was interviewed. Thirteen interviews were

scheduled beginning in January 2005, and all interviews were completed by May 2005.

### Procedures

The method for this study was direct interview, conducted at one sitting, recorded by tape and script-taped (handwritten notes were taken verbatim during the interview) as the questions were addressed.

### Instrumentation

The instrument for this study included the interview protocol (see Appendix C). The interview instrument was developed by the researcher based on a review of literature on case study and field testing with five respondents who were not part of the study. Questions were then revised to limit specific areas of research to the effectiveness of this new administration system from the perspectives of the three principal constituents affected by this system. Additional refining of the questionnaire using the ethnographic ethos of interpretive study allowed for the questions to remain as open as possible to elicit expanded responses, so that each individual constituency would be able to provide a unique insight into this particular case, yet still allowing for perhaps some common observations.

The interview instrument was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval in September 2004. Due to office relocation, the approval was

inadvertently delayed. Final approval for use of the interview instrument was received from the IRB in December 2004.

### Data Collection

A complete list of potential interviewees was drawn up by the researcher based on the following categories and criteria:

Community college partners: Interviewees must be full-time community college employees directly involved in the supervision and management of the institute.

Students: Interviewees must have (a) participated in and completed a course of study at the institute during its first four years of its operation; and (b) been involved in the institute, as an alumnus, even in a cursory way, as an actor, mentor, volunteer, or advisor so as to offer a broader, more objective perspective on the institute. Students were also selected from each of the four years of study and not weighted to any one particular year in order to provide a variety of perspectives based on the changes in the programs and staffing during the four years.

Administrator-instructors: Interviewees must have been employed full-time at the institute during the first four years.

A complete list of potential participants was solicited by the researcher from the executive director of the film institute and from the community college director responsible for direct supervision of the film institute. All of the suggested student participants were contacted and all were interviewed. Personal phone calls were made

to selected participants, each of whom responded affirmatively to participation in this study.

Beginning in January 2005, individual interviews were held with each of the participants. Each interviewee was assigned a number and category to ensure anonymity; each interview was held in a location selected by the interviewee to insure his/her comfort and openness in responding to the questions. Each interview lasted from 60 to 120 minutes, with the participant first responding to a set of preapproved questions for a specific category and later offered the opportunity to expand with comments and observations not addressed by the questionnaire. Data were collected by tape and the researcher's handwritten field notes. Data retrieval was received by typing transcripts of tapes and field notes, which resulted in verbatim accounts of all interviews. All data contained verbatim accounts of discussions and interviews.

Data obtained were analyzed using a combination of patterns and theme-building techniques, followed by categorical aggregation (Seidman, 1991; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Collected data were then reviewed and organized by the researcher in the following categories:

- Category 1: Advantages and disadvantages of the minimalist administration model manner;
- Category 2: Impact and effect of the model on three principal constituencies: community college, students, administrator-instructors; and
- Category 3: Shortchanging of the academic program by the use of this minimalist model.

- Category 4: Additional themes as observed by five or more respondents.

In Categories 1 and 4, common themes and observations were made across all constituencies. In Categories 2 and 3, common themes and observations were made first across all constituencies, followed by unique observations made within each constituent group. This separation of observations is particularly significant in observations and recommendations made to improve the education system, which are presented in Chapter 5.

Category aggregation and theme development was constructed after the completion of the interviews to avoid imposing responses on a predetermined structure (Seidman, 1991). Because of the uniqueness of this case study and the lack of comparable cases, the need for prominent themes to emerge was important to this analysis. This postinterview construction allows for the “telling quotes from the interviews” to provide patterns directly to the researcher, who when presents convincing details to the reader, which show that the author’s conclusion “makes sense” (Merriam, 1988, p. 120).

Because this researcher had also participated in and graduated from the program at the film institute, it was important to have checks in place to control researcher bias in the analysis. As Yin (2003) cautions when doing case study research, sometimes “an investigator seeks to use a case study only to substantiate a preconceived position” (p. 62). To control this possible bias, Yin challenges the researcher to test the degree to which he or she is opened to contrary findings. By allowing the category aggregation and themes to be developed post-interviews, this



researcher allowed the themes and analysis to lead the conclusions, as opposed to addressing the analysis with preconceived positions, thereby reducing researcher bias.

### Data Management

Typed transcripts were analyzed. Each interviewee was assigned an alpha and numeric code based on his/her constituent category and the order of the interview. The interview transcripts were studied and analyzed for consistent themes and patterns. From this analysis, specific theme categories were developed. The specific transcript data was then assigned into its respective category and later was subdivided again into constituent category.

### Summary

This chapter described the methodology used in this study; design of the study; population and sample; and methods and procedures for instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents an examination of the case study on the Arizona film institute's minimalist administration system. It attempts to provide the answer to the following questions from three distinct perspectives and searches for common observations across all constituencies: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a minimalist administration model in the administration of a film institute? What is the impact and effect of using a minimalist administration model on the three constituencies--the students, the administrator-instructors, and the community college partners? Is the academic program being weakened by the use of a minimalist administration model?

#### Data Analysis

After the collection of data and completion of transcripts, all material was analyzed for common themes. Borrowing from the Stake (1995), Yin (2003), and Seidman models (1991), the researcher first looked for common themes that emerged from the transcripts across all three constituent categories. The researcher considered the statements made, the context, consistent repetition of statements and observations,

and the frequency of comments to determine primary themes. This consistency established the first level of observations.

The researcher then studied each individual constituent group for observations that were unique to that particular group, including those that might challenge statements or observations made by others. Data analysis included constant comparison of statements and observations, integrated with theories and ideas posed by relevant literature, to develop concepts and conclusions of the study. These conclusions are presented in Chapter 5.

### Respondent Profile

Table 1 presents the composite data on the subjects of the study. The respondent group contained interviewees from three categories: students, administrator-instructors, and community college partners.

The male-to-female ratio of the student respondents interviewed was evenly divided. The majority of the student respondents were credentialed with at least an associate's degree, and 80% of the student respondents held a bachelor's degree. All but two students were nontraditional, possessing at least 10 years of professional experience in other fields. Mean age of the students profiled was 46.7, with 80% of the students being over 35. This is slightly higher than the mean age of the student population during the first four years of the institute. The student population during those years ranged from 18 to 69, with 70% of the students being over 35. This proportion shifted slightly from year to year, with no apparent or discernable pattern.

According to the administrator-instructors, one factor that appeared to influence the average student age was the ability of the students to afford to take time off to attend film school full-time.

Table 1  
Respondent Profile: Subjects of the Study

Respondents	Category	Number of years attended, employed at, or supervising film school	Age	Gender
A	Administrator-instructor	4	41	Male
A	Administrator-instructor	3.5	45	Male
A	Administrator-instructor	3	32	Male
S	Student	2	24	Male
S	Student	2	31	Male
S	Student	2	53	Female
S	Student	2	59	Male
S	Student	2	57	Male
S	Student	2	49	Female
S	Student	2	49	Female
S	Student	2	51	Female
C	Comm college partners	4	48	Female
C	Comm college partners	4	61	Male

Predominant themes and patterns to research questions were developed from responses across all respondents' profiles and were developed after the completion of the data transcriptions. No assumption was made that there was a typical behavior or response pattern by subject category.

Themes were identified when five or more respondents listed the same observation. Patterns were identified when two or more respondents listed the same

observation. Themes and patterns are reported in terms of individual perspectives, across all category respondents.

In presenting the data, the number of responses in each theme is not meant to be statistically relevant but merely an indication of how many volunteered a particular theme. Examples of respondent comments that emerged in relation to the particular theme and pattern are presented in their respective section. The number of respondent statements under each theme and pattern varies.

### Response to Research Questions

Research Question 1 asked, “What are the advantages and disadvantages of a minimalist administration model?” Three themes categorized as advantages and two themes categorized as disadvantages emerged. The three advantages identified were (1) strong family/comrades-in-arm/team environment; (2) intimate, motivating learning environment; and (3) less bureaucracy and quick problem resolution. The two disadvantages identified were (1) lack of sufficient time and staffing to address student services issues (counseling, financial aid, family/personal, tutoring) and (2) success under the minimalist administration model requiring highly specific administrator-instructor skill set, which would be difficult to staff.

### Advantages of the Minimalist Administration Model

#### Strong Family/Comrades-In-Arms Learning Environment

Within this Arizona film institute, the lack of bureaucratic layers of the minimalist administration model, coupled with the experiential learning design of the academic program, resulted in students and faculty working alongside one another to learn and apply the subject material. A majority of the respondents, across all constituent groups, observed that this structure created a strong family/comrades-in-arms learning environment. This appeared as the most frequently mentioned advantage of a minimalist administration model. This is a characteristic not generally found in literature describing traditional school environments.

Without the many layers of administration and teachers, we were all brothers-in-arms, comrades working together. It would have been a very different experience with more layers. There would have been more separation, less of the connection that makes this program so successful. (S-4)

There was definitely a family experience being created here, an intense, shared learning experience--a synergy that really helps drive this program. And this group, this family, was whipped into an enthusiastic frenzy, a passion about filmmaking. (S-5)

There is definitely a band-of-brothers, band-of-filmmakers mentality at work here. With A-I-1 as leader and A-I-2 as a first lieutenant . . . there is an energy, a rallying toward a goal that everyone shares. And that is an important factor which contributes to our learning. (S-2)

It was really a family atmosphere that first year. . . . We got to become this strong cohesive network of people with shared goals and challenges. (S-6)

The experience at this school is much like pulling a crew together to make a film. You have to be independent in thought and action, and yet be a team player. A-I-1 and A-I-2 are like the producer/directors of the film school, with

this relentless spirit and vision and we are their team, sharing in the focus toward the same goal. (S-7)

There is definitely a brothers-in-arms mentality at the school--an inspired energy that says: "We are all in this together." That is an aspect of every single class at the film institute. To the extent that the students can step up to that, then we succeed. (C-1)

I believe there is a comrades-in-arms mentality that prevails at the school, much like it does on a film set, where everyone is working in unison on a common goal--which is to make a film. Here at the film school, the common goal is to make 20 individual films and graduate 20 filmmakers. (A-2)

It's almost like the mentality of soldiers in the trenches during war. Every project is like, "Let's take that hill, soldier!" And everyone pulls together to get it done. We get to become this strong team, with the teachers like our leaders, but also working side by side, right next to us. I've never experienced that in a school before. We band together like comrades in a war. It's really the strongest team situation I've ever worked in. (S-8)

You have an energy that is critical to the success of this program, an intimacy, a comrades-in-arms mentality that is very motivating to working together. . . . It is an important factor. (S-5)

We still keep the student-teacher relationship here, but it is laid-back in terms of structure. We have this boys-in-the-trenches mentality. (A-3)

### Intimate, Motivating Learning Environment

The size of the film institute's administration and faculty under the minimalist administration model, the number of students, and the structure of the film institute's curriculum design created an intimate learning environment that helped motivate the students and their learning. The students also reflected high academic achievement on a extremely fast learning curve as a result of this model, measured by the successful completion of weekly student film projects in different genres (including scripts,

filming, editing, and production) and the completion of a more extensive student thesis film presented in a film festival at the year's end.

Because of the size and structure, there is an intimacy, close contact, and [a] motivational component that is a critical part of this program. If we expanded, I'm afraid that might be lost. (A-3)

There is an energy and intimacy that is generated in this kind of environment. Within such a small group, there are no walls, no separation, and no layers. This works very well to keep up the motivation and energy in this program. It makes for an intense, intimate, and wonderful experience. I'm afraid that more staff, more bureaucracy would ruin it. (S-5)

I prefer the intimate working environment of the minimalist system. . . . Here we lead them, but we are right beside them, in the trenches, working with them as they learn. Who needs the levels of bureaucracy? This is a great way to learn. (A-2)

The learning environment was intimate, supportive, where we not only got to learn, but we got to become this strong cohesive network. . . . There was great value in having a Spartan minimalist experience because it created this great atmosphere that made us want to work harder. We were like a "lean, mean, fighting machine" that set out to prove how much we could accomplish together. (S-6)

It was the best thing to be in this really close, intimate learning situation. We got to work closely, get to know each other. . . . The teachers and the students are together all the time, learning, working. It builds up a really strong connection. (S-4)

Filmmaking is the most intimate and collaborative work I have ever done. You get to know each other so well. This kind of intimate educational environment made for great learning and a very fast learning curve. (S-8)

In a traditional education setting, there is a distant educational relationship. Here, because there are not a lot of layers, we are able to get to know each student well, work closely with them, and not have this hierarchy between us and them. This intimate learning environment is a true advantage of a minimalist structure. (A-2)

We have doubled the number of students and have taken away some of the intimacy that made the program so positive and motivating in the first three years. (S-2)



### Less Bureaucracy, Quick Problem Resolution

Without the multiple bureaucratic layers typical of a traditional education setting, academic and administration problems and questions were resolved in a more timely fashion under the minimalist administration model.

The plus for our students is that when change needs to happen, when issues need to be addressed, it happens quickly because very few people are involved in that change. We can accommodate the students' needs in a very nimble fashion. (C-1)

This kind of model allows you to work without a lot of bureaucracy. You don't have to talk to anyone else. You make a decision and move with it. It helps you move a little faster within the bigger education system. (A-2)

With this kind of design, the problems get resolved right away. Whether it's for the student or for the college, A-I-1 is the go-to guy. No bureaucracy, just quick response to problems, and I prefer it that way. I never believed in lots of bureaucracy. (C-2)

This structure is great because it gives us the freedom to be able to stretch beyond traditional boundaries to address students' academic needs; and we can address them right away and not have to go through a lot of layers. (A-3)

There is a definite advantage in less bureaucracy and more independence. I like being able to make my own decisions and do it quickly. (A-1)

When events need to happen, situations need to be addressed, such as a school fundraiser that took place a year ago. It was put together in three weeks, without the typical "Mother, may I? Yes, you may," level of permission that usually occurs up the chain of command at a traditional educational institution. Without the layers, we can honor the nimble entrepreneurial spirit under which this school was established. (C-1)

In terms of bureaucracy, the efficiencies at this institute were a relief. You didn't have to guess where to go to address a problem. It was one place--to A-I-1--and he didn't like to waste a lot of time. He made decisions, got it done, and moved on. It was great. (S-8)

There are fewer levels of bureaucracy with a hope that the administration demands will lessen in the future. Many colleges are downsizing, trying to make do with fewer staff due to lack of available budget. And it's about time. (A-1)

Disadvantages of Minimalist  
Administration Model

Limited Time to Address Student Services Issues  
(Counseling, Financial Aid, Family/Personal, Tutoring)

As observed by a majority of the respondents interviewed across all constituent groups, the film institute seems to draw a large number of students with personal issues to resolve. This factor makes student services administration a more pressing responsibility for administrator-instructors.

There are frequent student conflicts, complaints about other students when they are trying to work together and the ability to see those problems resolve easily. Having a student services administrator or student services support system in place would really alleviate complaints and problem resolution between students. (S-1)

Many students come to film school to work through issues in their lives, using film as a vehicle of that evaluation, critique, and exploration of their lives. That can lead to challenging interpersonal relationships among students. Because this program is so student interactive, we find that A-I-1 has to spend a lot of his administration time working on student issues. (C-1)

Many student complaints were emotional, around getting along with other people, not being able to work as a team. . . . Having a better student-teacher ratio would have definitely helped that. (S-3)

I believe that student services and academic support services would help students achieve a better academic experience. . . . Even though it is an independent study kind of program, it would help to have student services, tutoring, and counseling. Student services program[s] provide needed support. (S-2)

Student issues really get in the way of other students learning, so these are fundamental issues that need to be resolved immediately. But there isn't the time to always handle that. . . . I deal with children at home and then have to deal with adults acting like children at school. (A-2)

The challenges in the program were largely interpersonal. Students put in a collaborative environment are always challenged to learn how to work with each other. This drained a lot of the administrator-instructors' time. (S-4)

I don't think that you could have imposed anything more on A-I-1, but student services was not taken care of. The kind of student services support you get at traditional colleges--everything from tutoring to help--you achieve more in academics or counseling on [a] one-on-one basis. . . . The administrator-instructors just didn't have the time to do it. (S-2)

With so many interpersonal and personality conflicts among the students every year, there has been some question about whether you should psychologically profile students before you let them in. But to me, it wouldn't help because you will always have people challenges whenever you make people work together. (S-5)

The personality of film students is the same as those attracted to filmmaking--they want what they want and they want it right now. This type of personality gets exhausting to deal with. They don't always understand the demands on an administrator-instructor's time. (A-1)

Within the minimalist model, it is just easier if the difficult students aren't there – the ones who challenge you constantly about all the work and the effort. Ten percent of these difficult students get 80% of my time. When you're already strapped for time, that's not fair to the other students. (A-2)

There is something about filmmaking, where people have to work together, where they are stuck with each other, making a movie. This situation forces them to address personal issues, behavior problems they have carried with them their whole lives. The human element is, at times, a lot more important than the academics here. (A-1)

A-I-1 gave his whole life to the students to help quickly solve their issues. . . . This school goes out of its way to serve students, keep them on track and graduate them. (S-6)

Highly Specific Administrator-Instructor Skill Set  
Required for Success Under This Model Would be Difficult to Staff

Many of the respondents made the observation that successful functioning under this minimalist model could be largely attributed to the highly specific skill sets

possessed by the administrator-instructors. Concern was raised that these skills, a combination of professional, business, administrative, psychological, and academic, might be difficult to match again in another administrator-instructor. Even among the three current administrator-instructors, the observation was made that these combined skills exist at varying degrees of competency.

There's a very specific set of skills required for an administrator-instructor to function well in this type of minimalist model. Not that I think I am some brilliant person, but I think that I happened to have had the right mix of skills to make this work. You can't just apply this model to every program unless you have the right people with the right skills in place. You need some who can do marketing, business, politics, curriculum development, administration, counseling--and teach film, on top of that, too (A-1)

It takes a special person, with specific skills to actually do this kind of job in this minimalist environment. (A-3)

Not just anyone could work in this kind of program. As academics, it would be interesting to imagine the skill sets we would seek if we were to lose these administrator-instructors. . . . We rely heavily on their specific skills to run the school. . . . We would not have been able to accomplish what we have in this program without the dedication and skill sets these administrator-instructors bring to the table. We also really rely on their commitment and vision. They are the reason the students stay in the program every year, all the way through the year. (C-1)

As soon as you shrink anything down into "minimal" form, then all the remaining components have to be of the highest skill and highest quality in order for it to succeed. The administrator-instructors definitely had these skills at different levels--all competent, just some more than others. (S-6)

I found the skills that A-I-1 had to run this school to be particularly impressive. He was a natural teacher, even though he had never taught before. Plus he was part businessman, part therapist, part politician, part manager, and a filmmaker on top of all that. I am not sure how the college found all these skills rolled into one person, but they were really lucky. They sure would be hard-pressed to replace him and his particular skill and talents if they ever lost him. I'm not sure anyone else could have done what he did to get this school started, graduate so many filmmakers successfully and generally keep the school afloat

like he's done. He's one-of-a-kind or at a minimum, a very, very rare individual. (S-8)

Not everyone could run a film school like this one, using this minimalist model. You have to have a huge range of skills to bring to the table: from teaching to administration to budgets to how to make a film to how to write a script. You need someone with multiple skill sets. (S-7)

There are two other academic programs which the community college is trying to run in the same minimalist model, assuming that the instructors can also be good administrators and good marketers. And they are having trouble filling the seats and keeping the programs afloat because they lack the right mix of skills. (A-1) (As of this writing, both programs had closed.)

Impact and Effect of the Minimalist Model of Administration on  
Three Constituent Groups: Students, Administrator-Instructors  
and Community College Partners

Research Question 2 questioned the impact and effect of the minimalist model of administration on the three constituent groups. One predominant theme and several patterns relevant to the individual constituent groups emerged. A majority of the patterns presented indicated the negative effect of this minimalist administration model on the specific constituent groups, with only one constituent group, the community college partners, indicating a pattern with a positive effect of the minimalist administration model.

Observations were also made by individual respondents relevant to the patterns found in other constituent groups. Those comments were included in the predominant constituent group section if they were relevant and supported the patterns.

### Time Challenges

One prominent theme emerged across all three groups: time challenges. Each of the respondent groups, however, expressed unique patterns regarding how time challenges, most frequently identified as “lack of sufficient time,” under the minimalist model of administration, impacted their specific group.

For the students, lack of sufficient time with administrator-instructors emerged as their predominant pattern. For administrator-instructors, two time challenges emerged. The first pattern was lack of sufficient time to focus on a personal life. Although this challenge is personally impactful to the administrator-instructors, it was also noted by a number of the students, with an indirect effect on this constituent group observed. Both the administrator-instructor and student perspectives are presented in this section. A second time challenge noted by the administrator-instructors--insufficient time to conduct marketing and recruitment programs to draw more students and higher quality students--is also presented. For the community college partners, tardiness in meeting reporting requirements emerged as the time-challenge pattern.

#### Impact and Effect of Minimalist Model of Administration on the Students: Lack of Sufficient Time With the Administrator-Instructors

This was the first time I had been to school in over 20 years. I was very surprised at the minimalist approach. I was very overwhelmed, and I could have used more support, which was not available because of the limited staffing. (S-3)

I always felt like we could have used more time with the instructors. (S-6)

They need to have two A-Is per program because it's too hard to get time with the administrator-instructors. (S-1)

The students could benefit from more classroom activity and from more time with the administrator-instructors, if they had more time on their hands. (S-2)

There was always someone complaining that they weren't getting enough time and attention with the instructors. They were upset that the instructors were doing administrative things when they should have just been focused on the academics. (S-7)

Some students want to be hand-held through this whole program and demand more and more time with the administrator-instructors. (S-8)

We need more teachers, even in a program like this with so much hands-on experience. It would still be better to have more student-teacher contact, because once you learn it badly, it's hard to undo bad habits and mistakes. (S-6)

There were many times the administrator-instructor didn't have enough time, largely because he was focused on another student. But eventually they got around to making it work for you. (S-4)

Impact and Effect of Minimalist Model of  
Administration on the Administrator-Instructor:  
Lack of Time to Focus on Personal Life

I think we spend way more than 40 hours a week at this program. We don't have much of an outside life, and it is hard to imagine ever getting one with this kind of commitment. . . . Not everyone could sacrifice what they do to work here, like we do. (A-3)

Right now this school is my life. There is a lot of work that needs to be done because of the minimal staff. But not everyone can function at this level of commitment. It takes all my life and my energy. There's not much time for anything else. (A-3)

This school could swallow me up and take everything out of me, if I let it, like I did last year. . . . The first four years, I put this job above everything else, and this year, I am trying to become more balanced. . . . It's either work or the family, not both. (A-2)

This minimalist model requires a lot of time out of me, particularly when I have deadlines. The commitment to school comes first, and my family pays for that, which is hard for them. . . . I was losing my relationship with my wife and my family, and I wanted to save that. . . . I am trying to take the time to balance my family with my work. Don't get me wrong--I love my work. I really do. But this year, now that we are done with the start-up years, I need to put my family as my first priority. (A-2)

We will do whatever it takes to get students to learn filmmaking. No matter how many hours we put in. Sometimes it's too much. We try too hard and lose a lot of our lives in the process. That's who we are. (A-2)

With this minimalist model, I have less time for myself, less time to work on my own projects, time to develop myself as a filmmaker, and less of a personal life. (A-1)

In the future, I would love to have a better balance in my personal life, and that may have to take the form of adding more staff. I hope that the community college can find a way to make that happen and that I don't have to quit my job in order to have a balanced personal life. (A-1)

I have to ask, "Can you improve the system before you eat people's personal lives up?" The truth is, everyone here loves what they do. They love to come to work and even think that it's not fair to be having so much fun. But at the same time, a better balance would be healthier. But what is the dollar figure to justify that cost factor for the college? (A-1)

But the awareness of this time issue as a challenge for the administrator-instructors was not limited to this constituent group only. Several students made similar observations about the administrator-instructors. Some even indicated that they would hesitate to approach the administrator-instructors about problems due to this perception.

It is incredibly difficult to be an administrator and an instructor in such a demanding program for years. Even from a student perspective, there is certainly the perception that our administrator-instructors do not have a life. Everyone needs a life, and you would hope that someday that would happen for everyone. (S-2)

To be an administrator-instructor at the school, you have to be willing to give up a good portion of your personal lives. With A-I-1, it's not as big a



challenge, since his wife works at the school. But with A-I-2, his wife and family definitely pull him in a different direction, and he's not as effective since he's trying to serve two masters. (S-6)

On the academic side, I felt the strain of approaching the administrator-instructors because they had so much else to do. Particularly with A-I-2, he was overwhelmed with trying to balance the students, the administrative work, and then his family life. Something had to get shortchanged, and usually it was personal. (S-1)

Knowing they had so much to do, I might have hesitated approaching them, particularly when I was aware that they were under the gun for community college assignments. They do every single meeting themselves--budgets, interviews, paperwork. Ultimately, they found a way to make time for me as a student. But they are stretched. (S-6)

For A-I-1, it was more than a job--it was his life and his vision. In this environment, the job did not end at five o'clock. (S-5)

During my year, A-I-1 tried to hide a lot of the extra work he had to do from the students, but I always knew he had a lot to do. He was always at school, he never went home. He was teaching, then there was the work from the community college, plus all the student problems. How could he have a life? (S-8)

It's a lot to put on one person--the teaching, the meetings, more administrative responsibilities, budgets, scheduling, community college reports. I went the first year and then the fourth year, and as the school grows, it gets worse. They have to give up a good portion of their personal lives to work here. (S-6)

For A-I-1, because his wife works here as well, his personal and professional life are blended. With A-I-2, his personal life is away from the school, and he has to struggle more to keep the balance. . . . The administrator-instructors are approachable and available, but the students know that they are clearly overworked and out of balance. (S-3)

A healthy balanced life is usually considered healthy in other parts of the world--just not here at the film school or in many corporate arenas. Certainly not in the minimalist model. (S-7)

Impact and Effect of Minimalist Model of  
Administration on the Administrator-Instructor:  
Insufficient Time to Conduct Marketing and  
Recruitment Programs to Draw More Students and  
Higher Quality Students

We can't work on the admin jobs well, particularly on marketing and recruitment and promotion of the school, because we don't have time. If we had more time for recruitment and marketing, we would be getting a higher quality of student. (A-2)

Right now, we don't have the luxury of filtering people out, the ones who are unmotivated and who you have to drag through this program. We just haven't had the time to spend on marketing and recruitment so that we can have a huge waiting list of students that we can choose from. So we're forced to try and keep these students in class, so we can keep up the numbers for the community college. (A-3)

If you're going to have a minimalist program, then it is critical to have the right kind of student to make the program run smoothly and be able to devote time to people who really want to learn. . . . When we have time for recruitment, we will have right numbers of qualified students, and we'll be able to afford not to accept the students who don't really want to commit to this intense program. (A-2)

The school does not seem to be big enough to warrant a marketing person. But it would be nice to have someone who is responsible for recruitment full time so we could try and recruit a higher quality of student. (S-1)

I think the school suffered on some level because of the minimalist system, particularly things like budget development, marketing and student recruitment, public relations, and getting the school known. That would have helped us get a higher quality of student. (S-6)

Impact and Effect of Minimalist Model of  
Administration on the Community College Partners:  
Inability of Staff to Complete Administration Tasks and  
Meet Reporting Deadlines in a Timely Fashion

Routinely, the administrator-instructors are not able to complete their administrative duties to the community college in a timely fashion. We are often chasing them to get their grades in and their reports submitted. . . . But

we acknowledge that there has to be some leeway in routine reporting to support this program, particularly given the minimalist design. (C-1)

I am not able to respond to the community college in a timely fashion on their reports and their requests. . . . I know the school needs it, but when a student has a problem, the student always gets first priority, and the reports arrive late. (A-2)

Sometimes I run into people caught up in their own job who say: "I need this paperwork done right now, according to this schedule." My feeling is, if it's three days late, is it really going to kill someone? Recently the vice president at the community college started to have someone look at all our red tape to figure out whether it was really necessary or not. (A-1)

I admit, part of my delays in getting things to the community college is time, and part of it is that admin is not my strong suit. . . . With all the other things I have to do, I put it on the back burner until I absolutely must do it. (A-2)

I am flexible about the reporting deadlines from the film institute--particularly at the end of the year, when the administrator-instructors are practically living at the school for 24 hours trying to help students finish their thesis films. You have to bend a little when they are working so hard. But then, they always know I have my drop-dead date. And before they leave for the summer, they know what they have to do. And they always make that--with a pushing, but they make it. (C-2)

I have very supportive vice president at the community college who agrees that the student needs come first, as long as I explain the situation and the delays to him, he understands. . . . In the academic arena, the student is your primary customer. (A-1)

#### Additional Impact and Effect Of Using Minimalist Administration Model

Two additional patterns, one negative and one positive, were identified in response to the question of the impact and effect of the minimalist model of administration on the community college partners. The first one identified challenges that occurred in using an alternative administration model with a traditional community college educational system. The second pattern, the only positive impact

noted by any constituent group, relates to the budgetary efficiencies achieved by using the minimalist administration model.

Impact and Effect of Minimalist Model of  
Administration on the Community College Partners:  
Conflict With “Traditionalist” Educators And Administrators  
Within the Community College System

The challenge at the community college is that educational “traditionalists” don’t get us because the first people we hire are entrepreneurs, not academics. They have good academic underpinnings, but they have not lived in the world of academe. (C-1)

We are an entrepreneurial element in a very staid academic model. Inherent in that dichotomy of structure are misunderstandings of people. . . . There is the expectation of credentialing that hinders the academe’s ability to appreciate the professionals. . . . But who better to prepare a student than someone who has worked in the industry for years? (C-1)

There are frequent conflicts with “traditionalists” educators, curriculum committees, budget managers who we had to explain the high capital overhead to. How do you explain to a curriculum committee how a student film is going to meet particular academic outcomes? This is a difficult sell for the academic side of the house. (C-2)

The politics of traditional academic institutions would not allow this minimalist administration model to happen easily. They hold very close to the familiar and traditional and the way it has been done for a long time. Try telling a chemistry teacher he has to go out and recruit his own students and you will run into amazing resistance. (A-1)

Our visionary community college president has left, and the “traditionalist” academics have taken over and everyone is feeling vulnerable about how this program and all our entrepreneurial programs are going to fare. (C-2) (As of this writing, two other entrepreneurial minimalist programs, digital media and computer arts, have been shut down. The film institute was kept open.)

Impact and Effect of Minimalist Model of  
Administration on the Community College Partners:  
Budgetary Efficiencies

The minimalist model certainly lowers your educational costs and keeps the school affordable for the students. That is what community college education is all about. (A-3)

The decision to move to the minimalist approach was budgetary at the start, then later developed into a stronger vision from the community college president to establish entrepreneurial types of programs that were deep, rather than wide. (C-1)

These programs are expensive propositions because of all the high capital equipment demands, high-tech demands. For the community college, the minimalist design made a lot of sense, particularly when you have a new financial officer who is looking at the cost per student head and saying, "Those are pricey programs." (C-2)

Because dollars are always scarce in any Arizona educational institution, you have to be mindful where you spend those dollars. . . . Our money goes into the program, not the administration, and that keeps it affordable to the students (\$41 per credit hour). We stayed away from administrative layers because we couldn't figure out what value that would add. Bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake is a big waste of time and money. (C-1)

Is the Academic Program Being Weakened by the Use of the  
Minimalist Administration Model?

Research Question 3 asked, "Is the academic program being weakened by the use of the minimalist administration model?" The initial observations on the first years were generally positive. Upon closer inspection, a number of qualifying comments were made in response to this question, particularly by the students who had attended the program a second or third year, when the student population size had doubled, without addition of staffing resources.

For the year that I was there, I did not feel like the academics were shortchanged by this type of administration. (S-7)

During my first year, I felt the academics were adequately handled. The administrator-instructor-to-student ratio was a lot better—2 to 20. (S-1)

Academically, we were very adequately serviced. We were never shortchanged and got more than enough education at the highest level of quality, despite the staffing levels. (S-2)

I don't let the quality of the academics or the quality of my teaching be affected by the minimalist model because I won't let that happen. I am truly committed to graduating each of these students as a filmmaker. That is my personality and my commitment. (A-2)

I've had some high-quality education in my life, and I can tell you, this academic program is up there with the best of them. There is nothing being shortchanged here. (S-8)

From an education perspective, the academics and teaching did not seem to suffer from this style of administration. (S-4)

The academics were not shortchanged under the minimalist model because the administrator-instructors used their passion and personalities to overcome the challenges. (S-6)

Academically, I came here to learn filmmaking, and that's what I did. I learned a tremendous amount and never felt shortchanged. There were certainly times when I questioned how it was working with such a minimalist model – teaching and administrating. But the bottom line is: it did work. (S-5)

Academically, the minimalist approach works well but only because the people who are doing it are exceptional. As the school grows and the administrative pressure becomes greater in the future, the academics are going to suffer. (S-6)

The academics are being accomplished but there is less time to do training and to support the specific education program. (S-3)

Although the majority of student constituents expressed affirmations about the academic program and believed it was not weakened by the use of the minimalist administration model, several also distinguished the first two years' positive assessments from their perspective on the program's later years, when the academic

program had been expanded and the student-to-administrator-instructor ratio had been halved. Their perspective on the academic program in the later years reflected an unsatisfactory assessment.

In my second year, I did not feel there were enough teachers under this model to support my academic experience. The ratio used to be 2 to 20 students, but then it became 1 to 20 and that was not enough. (S-3)

In the subsequent year, when the program was doubled in size, there were definitely more complaints because the administrator-instructors were spread too thin. (S-7)

The second year, I did not feel the academics were as adequately handled. The faculty-to-student ratio was not as good as it had been the first year. Plus A-I-2 was overwhelmed with all the students, the classes and administrative work. The student-teacher ratio was essentially halved, and it showed. (S-1)

Additionally, a majority of the respondents interviewed across all constituent categories agreed that the academic program was lacking specifically in the teaching of additional subjects not currently in the skill set of the current administrator-instructors. These subjects include sound design, special effects, and animation.

The school needs new blood--at the very least one or two professors who can teach new things such as sound, advanced editing, and special effects. (S-1)

The school really needs new instructors to help with sound design, special effects, Adobe after-effects, and animation. I did not get enough academically in terms of additional learning. The school is short-staffed on that front. (S-2)

Students have gaps in what we are able to teach them. We learn the new special effects programs and try to teach them, but it's not the same as having someone teach them who has actually worked in those highly technical jobs. (A-3)

Some of the instructors lack skills in a particular area. Some are better at hands-on teaching; some are inspiring, some are technically better. But because this is such a short program and it must be mastered in a limited period of time, we need more help with the program--particularly with computer-driven programs. And we need more staff in tech support. (S-4)

I certainly would have liked to have had somebody who knows sound as part of the academic program. But it would mean adding an instructor with additional skills. (S-5)

The only gap in this program was sound design. And for me, being a sound person for 25 years in television news, I thought it was a huge gap. They need to bring more industry professionals in. (S-6)

I would have liked to have had more time and more instruction on the technical subjects, such as camera and computers. I wasn't able to master the technical programs. (S-7)

### Common Observations

In addition to the themes and patterns detected in direct response to the interview questions, two additional themes impacting success under the minimalist administration model surfaced in the course of the interviews, commented on by a majority of the respondents: The strong leadership skills of the administrator-instructors, and the strength of the curriculum design.

Three additional patterns related to the administrator-instructors' specific leadership characteristics that are important to the success under the minimalist administration model are also presented: motivational and inspiring leadership; passion for the subject (filmmaking); and abilities as a stable multitasker. Visionary leadership of the community college partners also emerged as a pattern in the discussion of leadership skills required for success under the minimalist administration model and is presented.

Discussion on the theme strength of the curriculum design, related to two specific items, are presented as patterns under this theme: the experiential, hands-on



learning curriculum, and the students' ability to experience a model similar to the filmmaking situation.

Just as with the direct responses to the interview questions, in presenting these additional themes, the number of responses in each pattern is not meant to be statistically relevant but merely an indication of how many volunteered a particular theme. Examples of respondent comments that emerged in relation to the particular theme and pattern are presented in their respective section. The number of respondent statements under each theme and pattern varies.

A notation should be made in reference to the respondents' numerical assignment presented in Chapter 4: Respondents A-1, A-2, and A-3 are not the same as "A-I-1, A-I-2 and A-I-3" as referred to by the researcher and the respondents in the text throughout this study. The responses of A-I-1, A-I-2, and A-I-3 have intentionally been assigned a numerical variant for the purposes of insuring the anonymity of their responses. Likewise, the student respondents have been assigned a numerical variant to their order listed in the respondent profile, also for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality.

### The Importance of Strong Leadership

The importance of strong leadership was mentioned by 100% of the respondents in all categories as pivotal to the program's success under the minimalist administration model. This was the most predominant theme that emerged from all the data collected.

Success under this minimalist model is more dependent on the personality and leadership characteristics of the administrator-instructors than in traditional institutions where you have many other teachers, administrators, and personalities to fall back on. (S-5)

We [the administrator-instructors] are both motivators and leaders. If we didn't have our personalities and our leadership abilities, this school wouldn't work as well. (A-2)

Four total leadership patterns were identified as being important leadership characteristics. Three patterns related specifically to the administrator-instructors: motivational and inspiring leadership, passion for the subject, and the ability to be a stable multitasker; and one pattern ascribed solely to the community college partners: visionary leadership of the community college partners.

#### Motivational and Inspiring Leadership

Although two of the three principal administrator-instructors were credited with their leadership of the program, A-I-1 was singled out specifically for his motivational and inspiring leadership style. This was noted not only by the student respondents, but by the fellow administrator-instructors as well as the community college partners. Although the community college partners and fellow administrator-instructors stopped short of directly stating that without A-I-1's leadership, the film institute would not have succeeded, they also acknowledged that it was unlikely that it would have grown as successfully without his specific leadership.

That special leadership characteristic that A-I-1 has is something that you really need to succeed in this particular kind of program. If that motivational leadership style is not there, the academic program just coasts along. You can learn a lot from A-I-2, but he is more laid back, not as driven. (S-1)

A-I-1 is incredibly dedicated to the school. He truly believes that you can take anyone and make them into a filmmaker. I don't agree. But A-I-1 holds true to his belief and spends so much energy on leading and molding students. (A-2)

We would not have been able to accomplish what we have in this program without the dedication and skill set the A-I bring to the table, particularly A-I-1. We really rely on their commitment and vision. They are the reason the students stay in the program every year, all the way through the year. (C-1)

A-I-1 is a huge benefit to the school. His leadership style, teaching ability, and his ability to motivate are critical to the school. It would really lose something if he were to leave, particularly on the academic side. He is a great leader and a great teacher. (S-1)

A-I-1 was an absolute master leader, with a unique combination of skills--from working with challenging people and personalities to teaching. He had the ultimate patience, solid people skills, counseling abilities, total commitment to the school, the students, and an incredible knowledge of filmmaking. He was inspiring. (S-5)

A-I-1 and A-I-2 were both very good teachers, but A-I-2 was more plodding in his teaching. A-I-1 was motivating and inspirational. I learned so much more from him. (S-6)

I have never been treated with the respect, concern, and care I received from A-I-1. That person made me feel inspired, committed to my film project and my education. . . . Not to discredit other professors, but A-I-1 is an extraordinary leader who can hold 20 people mesmerized in a class. I'm not sure if someone other than A-I-1 could have made this happen. He has amazing character. (S-2)

It takes a very dedicated, inspiring leader to lead this group--who makes us want to jump onto this ship that might sink at any minute. But we are happy to do it for A-I-1. A-I-2 does not have the same thing; he does not inspire the same energy. He is a competent teacher, just not an inspiring one. (S-5)

To run a school under this model you need to have someone who is totally committed and dedicated to the success of this program. Someone else might say, "Go home at 6 o'clock." But I say, "There's too much to do to go home at 6. We have to stay to get it done--period." There are students counting on us, and I am not going to cheat someone out of their education. This is my own standard." (A-1)

A-I-1's influence on this school, in particular, is very large. He is not egocentric. He does not want to make everyone like him but recognizes that

his role is to be a great mentor and to help give birth to many visions. This makes the school very unique, when 20 different visions appear at the end of the year. (S-7)

### Passion for the Subject (Filmmaking)

I also think that our passion is another one of the critical characteristics for success in this program. Both A-I-1 and I have this passion for filmmaking, and if it were any other teachers other than he and I, this school wouldn't function in the same way. . . . Particularly in a minimalist system, the passion for the subject must truly be there to motivate the students. . . . I am creating constantly, and that never gets old. It's exciting to work every day, and the students see that in us. (A-2)

The film institute, like all our Community College entrepreneurial programs [fire, police, computer] operating under the minimalist approach, do well because of the leadership, commitment, and passion of the administrator/instructors. These people are the best advocates, the best salesmen, the best instructors for the program because they are so passionate about it. (C-2)

One of the unsung aspects of the program is that A-I-1 does everything he can to ensure that students succeed, not just in school but in the film industry when they are done. As the leader, he has a commitment, a passion, and ownership for the students and this program that has been a critical success factor. He wants to be sure that within the year, the student will have the technical skills and the personal skills to pull a team of people together, to motivate them, and to pull everything together to get a film made. . . . This is his passion and his life's work. (C-1)

Realistically, the staff at the school does not have the time to fully balance both sides – academics and administration--but they still do an amazing and credible job. What they lack in time, they make up for in passion and enthusiasm for the subject. You can overlook the limitations when they make up for it with passion. (S-6)

The truth is: Everyone loves what they do here. They love to come to work, and at times, we think it's not fair to be having this much fun. We love coming to work. . . . I am personally rewarded for this, not financially rewarded. I have memories that will last a lifetime from this experience. (A-1)

### Being a Stable, Multitasker

Another critical characteristic we have is having the type of personality that doesn't get stressed out by having too many things on your plate. Coming from the film industry as we have, we are used to having to juggle. You are always operating under that model-- learning to switch gears quickly, meet challenges, and make fast decisions without losing your cool. (A-2)  
For someone to work in this kind of environment and succeed in it, they have to be a self-starter, self-driver, be creative, and they have to be good "jugglers." (S-6)

Things change so quickly in this kind of environment, you have to be able to roll with the punches and be flexible as you need to and be calm and stable, even if everything is exploding around you. I never know what fires I have to put out that day – administrative or academic. But I have to be able to handle them all. (A-1)

A-I-1 was not a traditional academic. He had a lot of patience and tolerance for the great variety of student and situations he found himself in, and he never lost his cool. He was able to shift easily to accommodate the challenges – be it personal or professional. (S-4)

People might think that someone who was a filmmaker might not be the best person to run a school. But the main part of filmmaking, wearing many hats and learning to be flexible--that's exactly what made A-I-1 so good at running this school. It might have been utter chaos beyond the veil, but you never saw that because they managed the chaos so well. (S-5)

To be able to work under this minimalist model and be successful at it, you have to have strong organizational skills and be a great multitasker. Some of it is their experience being filmmakers. They are able to change focus to handle the task at hand and still go back to the long list of goals and get those accomplished, too. (S-8)

### Visionary Leadership of Community College Partners

Another peripheral leadership pattern identified relates to the leadership characteristics and vision of the community college partners as a critical leadership component necessary for the success of the minimalist administration model. In this particular case study, the comments were made in reference to the community college

president who advocated for and led in the development of the film institute and the minimalist administration model. This was particularly noted by the administrator-instructors and community college staff who worked most closely together in the development of this program.

I do not believe that a minimalist administration model would fly if burdened with the “traditionalist” approach to doing business as exists in a traditional community college. If the community college was fortunate to have another “visionary” leader at the helm as we had before, who could advocate and provide cover for the entrepreneurial-oriented programs, then the minimalist model would be successful. (C-1)

Proponents at the power centers of “traditional” higher-ed institutions would not have the leadership vision necessary to support the alternative perspective of the risk-taking minimalist model. (C-2)

When we started, we had a tremendous amount of support from the president of the community college. She was a visionary leader who thought outside the box. She shared that vision with the founder of the film institute, and together, this school was born. (A-1)

### The Strength of the Curriculum Design

Although the study and interviews focused on the minimalist administration of the Arizona film institute and not the curriculum design, a majority of the student respondents directly commented on the curriculum design as a distinct strength of the film institute’s academic program, focused specifically on the experiential, hands-on learning curriculum and students’ ability to experience a model similar to the filmmaking situation.

### Experiential, Hands-On Learning Curriculum

It's a great design for learning, where the instruction was followed by hands-on teaching. I learned a great deal during my time there, through instruction and then experiencing it hands-on--camera, scripts, making a short film in one week. I found this hands-on approach to be very good. (S-7)

The hands-on learning was ideal for learning filmmaking. You are learning it, then doing it, thereby testing yourself on a regular basis as to how well you are learning the technique just by doing it. You don't need a top heavy, layer-driven administration to do that, just facilitators to help make the learning happen, since you are learning by doing. (S-4)

With filmmaking, there is nothing that can compare with the hands-on experience. It's the perfect way to design a filmmaking program--you learn it, then do it. (S-6)

I liked the way the program was designed. You learn it in class, then learn it by doing it. Everyone was happy with that program. (S-1)

I had experienced all kinds of high-quality education in my lifetime, but this hands-on model, the learning through experience--that ranked as some of the best education I ever had. I was scared out of my mind the first time I ever held the camera, and by the end of nine months of learning and experiencing every job--*voila*, I was a filmmaker. Imagine a total immersion filmmaking boot camp, where you had to learn by doing everything. It makes for a very fast, very high learning curve. (S-8)

This is not a hard-core academic program with books and theory. This is actually a hands-on, almost apprenticeship program. (S-5)

My educational experience was a dream come true--to learn and understand the process of making films by doing it. I sometimes still can't believe I was able to accomplish this. (S-2)

### Students' Ability to Experience a Model Similar to the Filmmaking Situation

Using this minimalist model forces us to be independent, learning how to work without having your hand held. It forced me to be creative in addressing problems and challenges, much like what is required when you become a filmmaker in the real world. You meet challenges, find out things on your own, and learn to be innovative in solving problems. (S-3)

I think this is a really good way to teach film, replicating the filmmaking situation. Students learn quickly. They have more access to film equipment, and the learning experiences are strong and solid academically. (A-1)

The learning experience here was just like being on a film set. You are focused on one thing: filmmaking. And that is all you focus on--learning how to deal with the environment or the challenges of not having enough equipment, resources. It enables you to learn it very well and very quickly. (S-4)

The instruction we got was awesome. The experience was all the in the field, just like shooting on a film set--hands-on experience with the camera, hands on with the scripts, doing the short in one week. (S-6)

This program was a total immersion into filmmaking--a complete replica of the film experience. From the long hours to the challenges with actors or budgets or equipment and locations--it was all there. You got to see really quickly what the film industry was all about. The administrator-instructors were just like the producer-directors on a film set. (S-8)

### Summary

Respondents from three constituent groups provided insights into the effectiveness of this minimalist administration model on the administration and academic experience at the film institute, affiliated with a community college in Arizona. Their insights corresponded with much of the literature regarding essential characteristics needed for effective administration and leadership within educational institutions.

However, it was interesting to note that the effectiveness of the administration at the film institute occurred even while utilizing the unilateral minimal staffing model, directly in opposition to literature supporting the traditional multilayer bureaucratic administration models used by most educational institutions. This is a



particularly important factor to distinguish because none of the literature reflected an administration model similar to the minimalist administration model utilized by the film institute. This required this researcher to create the term “minimalist administration” to describe an administration model which had no previous history or comparable model, yet as reflected in this case study, for the most part, still functioned positively and effectively in the administration of the film institute and can now be deemed as a legitimate form of educational administration. The positive impact of utilizing this model included benefits to all constituent groups, including bureaucratic efficiencies and quick problem resolution; passionate, motivating comrades-in-arms environment; high academic achievement of the students; dedicated performance of the staff; and budgetary considerations for the community college partner.

Granted, not all observations were positive for the use of this minimalist administration model. Although the multiple efficiencies were positive, they were paid for at a high price by the students (with lack of academic and student services support), by the administrator-instructors (with lack of a personal life and time challenges), and by the community college partners (with reporting deadlines and time challenges). Additional negatives included challenges faced more specifically by the community-college partners, including: lack of support for this nontraditional administration model by other faculty and staff at this traditional institution; and the challenges the community-college partners would face in attempting to staff the administrator-instructor positions, due to the highly specialized skill set required for

successful administration and academic performance under the minimalist administration model.

Although the negative considerations resulted in a lack of universal support for the minimalist administration model, generally all three constituent groups expressed support for the use of the minimalist model, preferring instead to see the minimalist administration model modified to address some of the negatives, rather than eliminated. Certainly the positive impact on three critical areas (budget, academics, and bureaucracy) makes the minimalist administration model worthy of further consideration for educational institutions.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter contains an overview of the study; a summary of the findings, discussion of the conclusions, and the implications of the results; and recommendations for future research and recommendations for improvements at the film institute.

#### Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the minimalist administration model as it applied, in this particular case study, to the administration of a specific film institute affiliated with a community college in Arizona. This unique case study was undertaken to gain a base of knowledge about the use of this innovative minimalist administration model in staffing and administration within traditional schools and colleges. Lessons gleaned from this case study may assist traditional educational institutions in making innovative and cost-saving staffing decisions to use this minimalist administration model during leaner budgetary times and also allow them to understand the consequences and impact of such a decision on their staff and their students and on the quality of the academics and the educational experience as a whole.

Information was gathered by interviewing three constituent groups: the students, the full-time administrator-instructors, and the community college partners. Three questions were selected to be the basis of the interviews conducted with the three constituent groups involved in this research. The interviews were audiotaped, with handwritten notes taken verbatim during the interview. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim.

The questions were designed with an open-ended format without specific probes to allow the respondents to offer their own unique perspective as individuals and as members of their specific constituent group. In addition to direct responses to the interview questions, the researcher studied the volunteered perspectives of the respondents to search for additional themes and patterns not addressed by the direct line of questioning. These additional themes were presented in a supplementary section following the direct responses to interview questions.

### Conclusion

Respondents from three constituent groups provided insights into the effectiveness of this minimalist administration model on the administration and academic experience at the film institute affiliated with a community college in Arizona. Their insights corresponded with much of the literature regarding essential characteristics needed for effective administration and leadership within educational institutions.

## Discussion and Implications

### Hypotheses

In initiating this study, the researcher had three hypotheses regarding the use of the minimalist administration model in an educational institution.

#### Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated, “This study will find that, even with efficiencies enjoyed by the use of the minimalist administration model, this administration model will not be supported across all constituent groups.”

Findings. The three constituent groups identified multiple efficiencies enjoyed by the use of the minimalist administration model, including bureaucratic, academic, and budgetary efficiencies. Respondents contradicted the researcher’s hypothesis, and in fact, expressed consistent support for this model across all constituent groups because of these efficiencies. These findings of support for the minimalist administration model contrast with the literature review, which indicates that efficiencies in organizational structures are best achieved by a division of labor in which tasks are divided among many in an organization, not held by a single individual (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). However, in contrast to the efficiencies, unexpected factors surfaced in the interviews that affected the unconditional support for the use of the minimalist administration model.

Conclusions. From the perspective of all three constituent groups, the bureaucratic and academic efficiencies provided by this minimalist administration model were the most positive components of this model. Students and administrator-instructors, in particular, found inspiration and educational benefit from the more intimate and efficient model, which provided ready access to staff and a close learning and working relationship with the administrator-instructors. All three constituencies appreciated the lack of bureaucracy and the resulting ability to resolve problems quickly and have independent decision-making authority. The budgetary efficiencies brought on by the use of the minimalist administration model were most noted by the community college partners, who are primarily responsible for the management and disbursement of the film institute's annual budget. The budgetary efficiencies were not of primary concern with students and were randomly noted by administrator-instructors

Implications. The benefits of the efficiencies brought on by the use of this minimalist administration model cannot be denied. First, there was the intimate and inspiring educational environment, which provoked high academic accomplishment through weekly film projects and thesis films, as administrator-instructors worked side by side with the students to facilitate the learning without the bureaucratic separation prevalent in traditional education institutions. Second, the minimal bureaucratic structure provided for quick problem resolution and independent decision-making authority. And finally, in leaner budget times, when traditional educational institutions are looking for means of cost containment, the minimalist administration

model has its distinct economic advantages. At first glance, these efficiencies appeared to be solid and positive results from the use of the minimalist administration model.

But as this study further discovered, these economic efficiencies were paid for at a high price, by two critical constituencies--the students and the administrator-instructors. In this particular case study, these efficiencies cost the administrator-instructors the time and ability to have a personal life. This lack of time for a personal life was also noted by students who hesitated to approach the administrator-instructors with additional concerns because they were aware of the already taxing burdens the administrator-instructors were currently carrying.

There was also a distinct cost to the student for these efficiencies. Students complained about not having sufficient time for academic support from the administrator-instructors under this minimalist model. They also noted that under this model, the administrator-instructors had less time to handle student services issues, such as counseling and academic advising (the need for this appearing to be disproportionately higher in this particular student population), resulting in a challenging and occasionally disruptive environment when students were required to work together.

Clearly, strong positive results are achieved through the efficiencies of the minimalist administration model. The first are obvious budgetary efficiencies. The second, and perhaps most important, is the intimacy and close working relationship between the student and administrator-instructors within this unilayer environment and

high academic performance achieved as a result. The impact of this efficient and inspiring structure and academic setting, including the strong family/comrades-in-arms learning environment, in promoting a positive learning experience and high academic achievement is one rarely discussed in educational literature.

But one must ask, can the inspiring intimacy and close working relationship between the students and administrator-instructors be achieved only within this minimalist system or can it also exist within a more bureaucratic system? Is it the structure and system that breeds this intimate and inspiring atmosphere? Or is it the result of the personal style and involvement of the administrator-instructors that brings this about? In lean economic times, the budgetary efficiencies appear to offer benefits to the educational institution, but one must question, at what price do these budgetary efficiencies come? These are complex questions that must be raised when assessing the use of the minimalist administration model.

The literature seems to favor the establishment of more bureaucracy to support the multiple and varied tasks demanded of administrator-instructors, noting that there would be efficiencies even with greater levels of bureaucracy. As Weber (cited in Boje & Dennehy, 2000) notes in his organizational model, "Division of labor happens because tasks in most organizations are too complex to be performed by a single individual,[,] division of labor among positions improves efficiency" (p. 1). In Mintzberg's (1989) discussions of basic organizational models, he proposes several efficient organizational structures, the simplest of which has three levels of structure and the largest which has five levels of structure. Even Mintzberg's most *avant garde*,



innovative organizational model, the adhocracy model, which most closely resembles the minimalist administration model used by the film school, has more levels of bureaucracy than currently in place at the film institute.

Educational institutions need to consider more than just the obvious budgetary, bureaucratic, and academic efficiencies when deciding on the use of this minimalist administration model. An administration model that offers a balance of the minimalist model, combined with the more complex structures recommended in the literature, may hold the answer to this challenging question.

### Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated, “This study will find that even with the minimal structure, low levels of bureaucracy and decision-making authority, and cost efficiencies, the minimalist administration model will not be found to be a model that can be easily implemented and replicated in educational institutions.”

Findings. Respondents supported this hypothesis. Interviewees in all three constituencies agreed that replicating this identical minimalist administration model would be challenging for two reasons: first, the highly specific skill set that is required to operate successfully under this “minimalist’ administration model, and second, the lack of support for this innovative, nontraditional administration operational style at a traditional educational institution.

Conclusions. There are numerous impediments to the establishment of this model. The first relates to the potential challenges in staffing a program that uses a

minimalist administration model. The second relates to the challenge of acceptance of this avant garde model by the educational “traditionalists” at community colleges and universities. The literature on the use of innovative organization models supports this finding.

Implications. In addressing staffing concerns, respondents made frequent mention of the highly specialized combination of skills that must be present in the administrator-instructors for this type of model to be successful. In this particular case study, the three administrator-instructors employed by the film institute at the time of the interviews each possessed the highly specialized skill set, however, each to varying degrees. The highly specific skill set was observed to be most present in A-I-1, with the other administrator-instructors being assessed by the students as adequate but unexceptional, particularly in comparison to A-I-1. It was noted by a majority of respondents that it was highly unlikely that this program would have gone to the level of success that it had, were it not for the high skill factors of A-I-1. All three constituent groups were concerned that, should A-I-1 leave the film institute, the school might not manage well in the future. This concern was further exacerbated by the fact that the community college had established two additional programs using a similar minimalist administration model and both programs had folded at the time of the interviews, partially due to the deficiencies in the specific skill sets of the administrator-instructors.

When success of a program and administration model can be drawn directly down to one individual, its effectiveness as a working model must be challenged.

Even under the simplest administration structures reviewed in the literature, such as the autonomous style of the professional bureaucracy, in which the administrative structure is relatively flat, or Mintzberg's (1989) adhocracy model, in which there is an absence of bureaucratic structure, the issue is never raised that only a select few could successfully work under such an administration model. If this model requires such a highly specialized skill set to be successful, skills that are difficult to staff in the specific combination and competency level as needed to lead the program, then it becomes highly unlikely that this minimalist administration model can be readily implemented in educational institutions.

In examining the second impediment to the use of the minimalist model--the idea that avant garde, innovative administration models are a hard sell in traditional education institutions--both the respondents and the literature provide support for this position. As the community college partners respondents observed, this innovative administration and education model is challenged administratively and academically by the community college faculty and staff who have been operating under a traditional educational and administration for many years. The administrator-instructors concur, observing that those in academia hold quite close to the familiar and traditional.

As Mintzberg (1989) observes in *Mintzberg on Management*, many people with conventional perspectives have a hard time accepting and understanding the innovative organizational model, such as the adhocracy model--the model most similar to the film institute's minimalist administration model. "They view machine

bureaucracy as not just one possible form of structure but the *only* structure” (Hoy & Miskel, 1996, p. 70). And deviation from this model, in administration or academics, is not easily accepted.

Although not discussed at length by the respondents, the impact of this minimalist administration model on the faculty and their likely resistance to this model must also be addressed. As one administrator-instructor observed, “Try telling a chemistry teacher that he has to go out and recruit his own students, and you will run into amazing resistance.” Most faculty members would agree. Multiple factors support the hypothesis that this minimalist administration model will not be easily implemented nor readily supported in traditional educational institutions.

### Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated, “There will be identifiable leadership skills stated by the respondents and supported by the literature that are pivotal to success under the minimalist administration model.”

Findings. Both respondents and the literature supported this hypothesis, noting highly specific leadership skills needed by the administrator-instructors, which are pivotal to success under the minimalist administration model. Some of the skills identified were motivational and inspiring leadership, passion for the subject (filmmaking), and being a stable multitasker. Additionally, for the complementary leadership at the institutional level, being a visionary leader was also identified as a critical leadership skill needed for success under the minimalist administration model.

Conclusions. Respondents confirmed that there are specific leadership skills needed for success under the minimalist administration model.

Implications. Although specific leadership skills were identified as critical for the success under the minimalist administration model, the respondents were quick to make one extremely important distinction. They indicated that these leadership skills were present in varying degrees among the administrator-instructors and that the level to which these skills were present in the administrator-instructors definitely affected student performance and team productivity.

It has been suggested that one person cannot make a system work. But as this particular case study has shown, sometimes success of a system is dependent on a personality, a particular kind of leader who inspires and influences those working within the system to achieve new heights. Research certainly reflected this. Weber (cited in Mullins, 2004) described a leader called the charismatic authority model, or transformer model, in which authority is given based on the sacred and outstanding characteristic of the individual. This individual is endowed with heroic qualities and superhuman powers, set apart from ordinary people. People obey this leader by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelations, heroism or exemplary qualities--essentially, belief in his charisma. The charismatic leader is often described with words such as warrior, prophet, hero, or visionary. Similar attributes were certainly ascribed to A-I-1 by respondents from all constituent groups.

Blake and Mouton (1985), in identifying the primary responsibilities of the academic administrator in a college or university, presented an Academic

Administrator Grid Model as a systematic framework for identifying where administrators fit on the grid. They based the model on two fundamental aspects of leadership that an academic administrator uses in exercising his/her responsibilities: (1) concern for institutional performance, and (2) concern for people. These two characteristics of leadership are also strongly present in A-I-1, in levels beyond where they are present in other administrator-instructors, and this is where the leadership distinction lies. When it is present in higher degrees, the support for the program and the performance within the film institute are taken to a higher level.

Noting the distinctions made by the respondents between the leadership characteristics of A-I-1 and the other two administrator-instructors brought to mind the distinctions Schlechtny (1990 cited in Labbie, 2000) proposes in his leadership model between the trailblazers, who love to take paradigm-breaking journeys without maps and only a vision to guide, and pioneers, who are willing risk-takers who will make changes once they know it is possible and worthwhile. Although the entire administrator-instructor team was given credit by the respondents for leading within this paradigm-breaking journey of initiating this film institute, under the minimalist administration model, a majority of the respondents, as well as A-I-2 and A-I-3, agreed that they were followers behind A-I-1, who possessed skill and vision and relished the challenge of guiding the entire organization on a trailblazing journey without a map. Although “trailblazer” and “pioneer” are often used interchangeably in describing Schlechtny’s leadership models, in this case study, the fine distinction between the two becomes obvious.

The importance of exceptional and visionary leadership is even more critical when leading an innovative, avant garde model, such as this “minimalist” administration model of a film institute in Arizona. In this particular case study, the strength of leadership appeared to be more important to success under the minimalist administration model than the actual structure and functioning under this model. This was an unexpected conclusion that arose from the qualitative assessment and one that must be kept at the forefront when considering the use of the innovative minimalist administration model.

Former teacher and current organizational consultant Donald Rollie observes that many school administrators are having a hard time leading through contemporary educational reform:

It is not surprising that they are struggling, because not only are they being asked to change their leadership skills and styles, but the whole culture is changing around them. . . . While leadership skills have always been a concern of professionals in the education field, today's times are unprecedented. . . . The dominant leadership skills in school administration will never return to those who are directive or authoritarian, or involve simple decision making. . . . Administrators who are having the most difficulty in the current context of school change are those in the autocratic end of style inventories. . . . Typically, organizations in this country have been hierarchical, the education system included. This is the culture in which most administrators grew up and learned their professions. On the surface, this way of organizing is most efficient, but it is not productive in the long run. . . . The school systems that have done the best job generally have been led by courageous, visionary superintendents who have been able to gain the support of all their constituents. (Lewis, 1993, p. 11)

For this minimalist administration model to be successful even potentially, the administrator-instructors have had to do as Rollie suggests and relinquish typical hierarchical administration and leadership styles in exchange for courageous and

visionary leadership that engages the support of all their constituents, which in this case study were the students, community college partners, and the fellow administrator-instructors themselves.

As Rollie suggests, successful administrators in contemporary education situations must develop collegial styles. “This does not mean they have to relinquish decision making, but they must come to decisions in a different way. . . . The new skills are those of collaborator, communicator, and ombudsperson” (Lewis, 1993, p. 12). These leadership skills were certainly identified by all constituent groups as some of the primary contributing factors for success under the minimalist administration model reviewed in this case study. This is a critical factor to keep in mind for those considering using the minimalist administration model, particularly those who operate under more traditional educational models that encourage authoritarian, autocratic styles. Success under this innovative administration model is likely to be dependent on equally innovative and inspiring leadership.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

This case study has identified a distinct balance of benefits and drawbacks for the use of this minimalist administration model. Leadership in educational institutions, working in leaner budgetary times, may be drawn to its budgetary and staffing efficiencies. Faculty and administrators may be drawn to the minimal bureaucracy, independent decision-making authority, and efficiencies in problem resolutions. Students are likely to find the close working relationship and inspiring,



motivational environment to be critical to their learning, productivity, and performance. In balance, however, all constituent groups offered an opposite negative perspective that also must be considered: the significant time challenges imposed by this minimalist administration model--personal, academic, and administrative.

Given these factors, the following are offered as recommendations for further research:

- A focus group study should be convened to address the question: Can this minimalist administration be modified and improved to preserve the benefits of the model and address the challenges identified by this case study (a) to provide for a better working situation for the administrator-instructors, and (b) to allow for more support for this innovative model from the leadership at traditional educational institutions?
- More in-depth study should focus on whether the benefits of the intimate, motivational, and inspiring learning environment and the resultant high academic performance is actually a distinct result of the use of this minimalist administration model or whether it could be replicated and achieved in a traditional educational environment.
- A study on the psychological profiles of inspiring educational leaders and the personal and personality characteristics that define and motivate their exceptional leadership and performance should be undertaken.
- Recommendations for community colleges to implement similar programs within a limited certificate program or subject area (such as filmmaking,

computer training, arts) and test the efficiencies, effectiveness, and benefits to the community college, while at the same time measuring and monitoring the quality of the academic experience for the student.

- Film industry professionals should explore the development business-education partnerships or business-education consortiums with community colleges to ensure the creation of high-quality, highly motivational experiential learning programs for new student filmmakers, utilizing many of the positive components of this film institute in Arizona.

### Conclusion

It is difficult for this researcher to decide absolutely either in favor or in opposition to this minimalist administration model. It offered many benefits to all three constituencies interviewed, particularly from an academic perspective, which is the most critical outcome for education institutions. Although the price for these benefits and efficiencies appeared high, it was also noted that these costs were paid almost willingly by inspired charismatic leaders who led the film institute with a passion rarely found in academia. It was these exceptional leadership characteristics that most garnered this researcher's attention.

Although it appeared from the respondents' perspective that visionary and exceptional leadership was a strong factor in the success of this administration model, it was also the researcher's conclusion that innovative thought and leadership style alone is not enough to be successful under the minimalist administration model.

Leadership consultants Kenneth Blanchard and Drea and Patricia Zigarmi (cited in Lewis, 1993) propose that choices for administration and leadership styles are situational, dependent on such factors as time constraints, job and task demands, school climate and culture, and employee skills and expectations. They cite that

the most important factor in determining style in a given situation, however, is the “development level” of those being supervised. . . . Very competent and committed subordinates may respond better to a leader who delegates and supports rather than to one who coaches and directs. (p. 21)

The high development level of all the administrator-instructors, including their professional knowledge, strong competence, high-level skills, and personal sacrifice and commitment, were also identified as contributing factors to success under the minimalist administration model. With the high skill level of the administrator-instructor team, coupled with the visionary leadership and support of the community college partners, A-I-1 was able to adopt a leadership style that was not traditionally authoritative and directive but instead was more innovative, collegial, motivational, and supportive.

As this case study of the film institute reflected, when the community college partner made innovative choices in administration structure and staffing, including utilizing nonacademics with highly specialized skills and strong leadership capabilities to work in a minimalist administration model, many positive benefits were actualized, from high academic achievement to heightened staff productivity to budgetary efficiencies. The choices to make accommodations or to utilize innovative models will have to be made by educational institutions on a case-by-case basis. But certainly, if administrators are going to navigate successfully through the changing

landscape of educational reform, brought on by any number of factors, including the changing student population or budgetary challenges, they will have to examine and perhaps even adopt innovative, nontraditional models for teaching and administration. And they will have to find new ways to lead their traditional organization through those changes. In a 1993 report issued by the American Association of School Administrators (Lewis, 1993) entitled *Leadership Styles*, it was observed that in order to lead institutions through the contemporary educational reform and “the challenges of system[-]wide change” (p. 10) occurring in schools around the country, educational administrators are going to have to learn some hard truths about leadership and change how they lead.

Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline* (cited in Lewis, 1993), describes this innovative environment as a “learning organization” that engages competent and committed staff in building a successful school. “The way to build a successful school is to do it with people who truly want to be there, who love what they do. . . . That environment can only be built by leaders who see the school as a whole and who create a place where teachers can learn--a learning organization” (p. 25). This was certainly the situation within the film institute and community college in Arizona that was the subject of this case study. These people love what they were doing--from the students, to the administrator-instructor, to the community college partners--and their passion for this subject and this work was something this researcher has rarely seen in the multitude of environments and professions in which she has worked.

From the researcher's perspective, it was interesting to note how Senge's model (Lewis, 1993), as well as this minimalist administration model, both derive benefits from the love of the subject and the job, in direct contrast to the "impersonal orientation" suggested by Weber as being important to the working atmosphere of a successful bureaucracy (Boje & Dennehy, 2000). This passionate, motivating environment clearly impacted the high academic achievement of the students, as well as the dedicated performance of the staff--perhaps two of the most important considerations for educational institutions.

Senge (1990, cited in Lewis, 1993) identifies five disciplines that operate within successful "learning organizations." These same disciplines were readily evident in this case study:

1. Building shared vision. Instead of using a charismatic but dictatorial approach, leaders work toward a shared vision that encourages commitment, rather than compliance.
2. Personal mastery. Learning organizations foster learning individuals who are constantly clarifying and intensifying their vision and skills.
3. Mental models. A learning organization encourages thinking about thinking, avoiding the pitfall of becoming stuck with dysfunctional assumptions and ways of operating.
4. Team learning. Real teams are aligned around a common purpose and truly learn how to think together; they are open and inclusive.
5. Systems thinking. This integrates the other four disciplines, going beyond the events to discover the deeper structures that control events and how to leverage them. (Lewis, 1993, p. 25)

These five disciplines were found to be practiced not just by the administrator-instructors who worked under this minimalist administration model in this case study but were found to be shared by the supervising community college partners, as well as

the students. This contributed to a strong sense of shared vision and purpose across all constituencies being served within this film institute. Senge encourages adapting these disciplines throughout schools, thereby creating a comprehensive “learning organization.” “All children come to school wanting to learn, so the leadership question becomes not how to motivate them but how to keep the motivation they already have” (Senge, 1990, p. 63). Applying these five disciplines assists in creating new “learning organizations” for everyone, from administrators to instructors to students. This comprehensive “learning organization” has come to life at this film institute in Arizona, influenced in some part, despite all its flaws, by the use of this minimalist administration model. Perhaps that is reason enough to consider it as a viable administration model.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

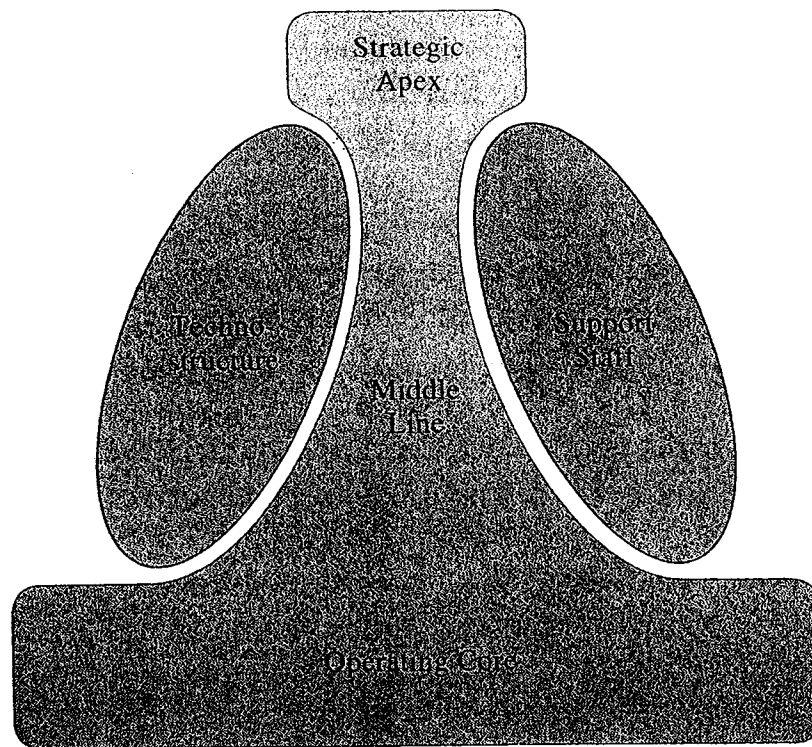
HOY AND MISKEL'S TYPOLOGY OF  
SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

		<b>Professional Pattern</b>	
		High	Low
<b>Bureaucratic Pattern</b>	High	Weberian	Authoritarian
	Low	Professional	Chaotic

Source: Hoy and Miskel (1996).

## APPENDIX B

### MINTZBERG'S FIVE BASIC PARTS OR ORGANIZATIONS



Source: Mintzberg, 1979, *The Structuring of Organizations*

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



These are primary questions the researcher asked:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a minimalist administration model in the administration of a film institute?
2. What is the impact and effect of using a minimalist administration model on
  - a. the students,
  - b. the administrator-instructors, and
  - c. the community college partners?
3. Is the academic program being weakened by the use of the minimalist administration model?

Depending on the respondent's answers, these may have been typical follow-up questions:

- How would you describe your overall academic experience at the film institute?
- Did you believe there were enough teachers to support your academic experience? Enough administrators to support your student needs?
- What, if any, were the student/administrator/community college complaints during your time at the Institute?
- Would you recommend utilizing this model of administration for other academic programs or other two-/four-year academic institutions?
- Elaborate on
  - the specific leadership qualities you find in the administrator-instructors,
  - time constraints/lack of a personal life,
  - the experiential learning program/curriculum design.
- Would increasing the number of staff at the Institute, either teachers or administrators, provide a better educational experience for the students or a better working experience for the administrator-instructors?
- If you could make any suggestions or recommendations to improve the quality of the educational/teaching/administrative experience at the film institute, what would they be?